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THE SPEECHES
AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES OF
THE RIGHT HON.
W. E. GLADSTONE
M.P.
WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTIONS

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND BILL, House of Commons, April 8th, 1886,	1
HOME RULE, House of Commons, April 13, 1886,	53
HOME RULE, House of Commons, May 10, 1886,	71
HOME RULE, House of Commons, June 7, 1886,	102
HOME RULE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES, Edinburgh, Friday, June 18, 1886,	128
THE GENERAL ELECTION, Liverpool, June 28, 1886,	152
CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT (IRELAND) BILL, House of Commons, March 29, 1887,	177
THE INCOME TAX, THE NATIONAL DEBT, AND THE SINKING FUND, House of Commons, April 25, 1887,	202
WELSH AND IRISH NATIONALITY, Swansea, June 4, 1887,	224
THE IRISH QUESTION, Swansea, June 4, 1887,	238
CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT (IRELAND) BILL, House of Commons, July 7, 1887,	254
THE QUEEN'S REIGN, Hawarden, August 30, 1887,	273
MITCHELLSTOWN, House of Commons, September 12, 1887,	283
IRELAND, Derby, October 20, 1887,	297
THE STATE OF IRELAND, House of Commons, February 17, 1888,	310
NATIONAL DEBT CONVERSION, March 9, 1888,	343
THE DEATH DUTIES, House of Commons, April 23, 1888,	348
THE GOVERNMENT AND IRELAND, the Memorial Hall, London, May 9, 1888,	378

THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND BILL,

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 8TH, 1886

The Government of Ireland Bill, generally known as the "Home Rule" Bill, passed its first reading on April 13th without a division after four nights debate.

I COULD have wished, Mr Speaker, on several grounds that it had been possible for me on this single occasion to open to the House the whole of the policy and intentions of the Government with respect to Ireland. The two questions of land and of Irish Government are, in our view, closely and inseparably connected, for they are the two channels through which we hope to find access, and effectual access, to the question which is the most vital of all—namely, the question of social order in Ireland. As I have said, those two questions are, in our view—whatever they may be in that of any one else—they are in our view, for reasons which I cannot now explain, inseparable the one from the other. But it is impossible for me to attempt such a task. Even as it is, the mass of materials that I have before me I may, without exaggeration, call enormous. I do not know that at any period a task has been laid upon me involving so large and so diversified an exposition, and it would be in vain to attempt more than human strength can, I think, suffice to achieve. I may say that, when contemplating the magnitude of that task, I have been filled with a painful mistrust; but that mistrust, I can assure the House, is absorbed in the yet deeper feeling of the responsibility that would lie upon me, and of the mischief that I should inflict upon the public interest, if I should fail to bring home to the

minds of members, as I seem to perceive in my own mind, the magnitude of all the varied aspects of this question. What I wish is that we should no longer fence and skirmish with this question, but that we should come to close quarters with it; that we should get if we can at the root; that we should take measures not merely intended for the wants of to-day and of to-morrow, but if possible that we should look into a more distant future; that we should endeavour to anticipate and realise that future by the force of reflection; that we should if possible unroll it in anticipation before our eyes, and make provision now, while there is yet time, for all the results that may await upon a right or wrong decision of to-day.

Mr Speaker, on one point I rejoice to think that we have a material, I would say a vital, agreement. It is felt on both sides of the House, unless I am much mistaken, that we have arrived at a stage in our political transactions with Ireland, where two roads part one from the other, not soon probably to meet again. The late Government—I am not now referring to this as a matter of praise or blame, but simply as a matter of fact—the late Government felt that they had reached the moment for decisive resolution when they made the announcement, on the last day¹ of their ministerial existence, that their duty compelled them to submit to Parliament proposals for further repressive criminal legislation. We concur entirely in that conclusion, and we think that the time is come when it is the duty of Parliament, when the honour of Parliament and its duty alike require, that it should endeavour to come to some decisive resolution in this matter; and our intention is, sir, to propose to the House of Commons that which, as we think, if happily accepted, will liberate Parliament from the restraints under which of late years it has ineffectually struggled to perform the business of the country; will restore legislation to its natural, ancient, unimpeded course; and will, above all, obtain an answer—a clear, we hope, and definite answer—to the question whether it is or is not possible to establish good

¹ January 26.

and harmonious relations between Great Britain and Ireland on the footing of those free institutions to which Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen are alike unalterably attached.

Now, when I say that we are imperatively called upon to deal with the great subject of social order in Ireland, do not let me, for a moment either be led myself or lead others into the dangerous fault of exaggeration. The crime of Ireland, the agrarian crime of Ireland, I rejoice to say, is not what it was in other days—days now comparatively distant, days within my own earliest recollection as a member of Parliament. In 1833 the Government of Lord Grey proposed to Parliament a strong Coercion Act. At that time the information at their command did not distinguish between agrarian and ordinary crime as the distinction is now made. As to the present time, it is easy to tell the House that the serious agrarian crimes of Ireland, which in 1881 were 994, in 1885 were 239. But I go back to the period of 1832. The contrast is, perhaps, still more striking. In 1832 the homicides in Ireland were 248, in 1885 they were 65. The cases of attempts to kill, happily unfulfilled, in the first of those years were 209, in 1885 were 37. The serious offences of all other kinds in Ireland in 1832 were 6,014, in 1885 they were 1,057. The whole criminal offences in Ireland in the former years were 14,000, and in the latter year 2,683.

So far, therefore, sir, we are not to suppose that the case with which we have now to deal is one of those cases of extreme disorder which threaten the general peace of society. Notwithstanding that, sir, in order to lay the ground for the important measure we are asking leave to introduce—and well I am aware that it does require broad and solid grounds to be laid in order to justify the introduction of such a measure—in order to lay that ground, I must ask the House to enter with me into a brief review of the general features of what has been our course with regard to what is termed coercion, or repressive criminal legislation. And, sir, the first point to which I would call your attention is this, that whereas exceptional legislation—

legislation which introduces exceptional provisions into the law—ought itself to be in its own nature essentially and absolutely exceptional, it has become for us not exceptional but habitual. We are like a man who, knowing that medicine may be the means of his restoration to health, endeavours to live upon medicine. Nations, no more than individuals, can find a subsistence in what was meant to be a cure. But has it been a cure? Have we attained the object which we desired, and honestly desired, to attain? No, sir, agrarian crime has become, sometimes upon a larger and sometimes upon a smaller scale, as habitual in Ireland as the legislation which has been intended to repress it, and that agrarian crime, although at the present time it is almost at the low water-mark, yet has a fatal capacity of expansion under stimulating circumstances, and rises from time to time, as it rose in 1885, to dimensions and to an exasperation which becomes threatening to general social order, and to the peace of private and domestic life. I ought, perhaps, to supply an element which I forgot at the moment in comparing 1832 and 1885, that is to remind the House that the decrease of crime is not so great as it looks, because the population of Ireland at that time was nearly 8,000,000, whereas it may be taken at present at 5,000,000. But the exact proportion, I believe, is fairly represented by the figure I will now give. The population of Ireland now, compared with that time, is under two-thirds; the crime of Ireland now, as compared with that period, is under one-fifth.

But the agrarian crime in Ireland is not so much a cause as it is a symptom. It is a symptom of a yet deeper mischief of which it is only the external manifestation. That manifestation is mainly threefold. In the first place, with certain exceptions for the case of winter juries, it is impossible to depend in Ireland upon the finding of a jury in a case of agrarian crimes according to the facts as they are viewed by the Government, by the judges, and by the public, I think, at large. That is a most serious mischief, passing down deep into the very groundwork of civil society. It is also, sir, undoubtedly a mischief that the

cases where the extreme remedy of eviction is resorted to by the landlord—possibly in some instances unnecessarily resorted to, but in other instances resorted to after long patience has been exhausted—these cases of eviction, good, bad, and indifferent as to their justification, stand pretty much in one and the same discredit with the rural population of Ireland, and become, as we know, the occasion of transactions that we all deeply lament. Finally, sir, it is not to be denied that there is great interference in Ireland with individual liberty, in the shape of intimidation. Now, sir, I am not about to assume the tone of the Pharisee on this occasion. There is a great deal of intimidation in England, too, when people find occasion for it; and if we, the English and the Scotch, were under the conviction that we had such grave cause to warrant irregular action, as is the conviction entertained by a very large part of the population in Ireland, I am not at all sure that we should not, like that part of the population in Ireland, resort to the rude and unjustifiable remedy of intimidation. I am very ambitious on this important and critical occasion to gain one object—that is, not to treat this question controversially. I have this object in view, and I do not despair of attaining it; and in order that I may do nothing to cause me to fail of attaining it, I will not enter into the question, if you like, whether there is ever intimidation in England or not. But I will simply record the fact, which I thought it but just to accompany with a confession with regard to ourselves—I will simply record the fact that intimidation does prevail, not to the extent that is supposed, yet to a material and painful extent, in Ireland. The consequence of that is to weaken generally the respect for law, and the respect for contract, and that among a people who, I believe, are as capable of attaining to the very highest moral and social standard as any people on the face of the earth. So much for coercion—if I use the phrase it is for brevity for repressive legislation generally—but there is one circumstance to which I cannot help drawing the special attention of the House.

Nothing has been more painful to me than to observe that

in this matter we are not improving, but, on the contrary, we are losing ground. Since the last half century dawned, we have been steadily engaged in extending, as well as in consolidating, free institutions. I divide the period since the Act of Union with Ireland into two—the first from 1800 to 1832, the epoch of what is still justly called the great Reform Act, and, secondly, from 1833 to 1885. I do not know whether it has been as widely observed as I think it deserves to be that in the first of those periods—thirty-two years—there were no less than eleven years—it may seem not much to say, but wait for what is coming—there were no less than eleven of those thirty-two years in which our Statute-book was free throughout the whole year from repressive legislation of an exceptional kind against Ireland. But in the fifty-three years since we advanced far in the career of Liberal principles and actions—in those fifty-three years, from 1833 to 1885—there were but two years which were entirely free from the action of this special legislation for Ireland. Is not that of itself almost enough to prove that we have arrived at the point where it is necessary that we should take a careful and searching survey of our position? For, sir, I would almost venture, trusting to the indulgent interpretation of the House, to say that the coercion we have heretofore employed has been spurious and ineffectual coercion, and that if there is to be coercion—which God forbid—it ought to be adequate to attain its end. If it is to attain its end it must be different, differently maintained, and maintained with a different spirit, courage, and consistency compared with the coercion with which we have been heretofore familiar.

Well, sir, what are the results that have been produced? This result above all—and now I come to what I consider to be the basis of the whole mischief—that rightly or wrongly, yet in point of fact, law is discredited in Ireland, and discredited in Ireland upon this ground especially—that it comes to the people of that country with a foreign aspect, and in a foreign garb. These Coercion Bills of ours, of course—for it has become a matter of course—I am speaking of the facts and not of the merits—these Coercion Bills are stiffly resisted by the members

who represent Ireland in Parliament. The English mind, by cases of this kind and by the tone of the press towards them, is estranged from the Irish people, and the Irish mind is estranged from the people of England and Scotland. I will not speak of other circumstances attending the present state of Ireland, but I do think that I am not assuming too much when I say that I have shown enough in this comparatively brief review—and I wish it could have been briefer still—to prove that if coercion is to be the basis for legislation we must no longer be seeking as we are always laudably seeking, to whittle it down almost to nothing at the very first moment we begin, but we must, like men, adopt it, hold by it, sternly enforce it till its end has been completely attained, with what results to peace, goodwill, and freedom I do not now stop to inquire. Our ineffectual and spurious coercion is morally worn out. I give credit to the late Government for their conception of the fact. They must have realised it when they came to the conclusion in 1885 that they would not propose the renewal or continuance of repressive legislation. They were in a position in which it would have been comparatively easy for them to have proposed it, as a Conservative Government following in the footsteps of a Liberal Administration. But they determined not to propose it. I wish I could be assured that they and the party by whom they are supported were fully aware of the immense historic weight of that determination. I have sometimes heard language used which appears to betoken an idea on the part of those who use it that this is a very simple matter—that, in one state of facts, they judged one way in July,¹ and that, in another state of facts, they judged another way in January;² and that consequently the whole ought to be effaced from the minds and memories of men. Depend upon it the effect of that decision of July never can be effaced—it will weigh, it will tell upon the fortunes and circumstances both of England and of Ireland. The return to the ordinary law, I am afraid, cannot be said to have succeeded.

¹ When Lord Salisbury's administration which had just been formed decided not to propose the renewal of the "Crimes" Act.

² Soon after the General Election.

Almost immediately after the lapse of the Crimes Act boycotting increased fourfold. Since that time it has been about stationary; but in October it had increased fourfold compared with what it was in the month of May. Well, now, if it be true that resolute coercion ought to take the place of irresolute coercion—if it be true that our system, such as I have exhibited it, has been—we may hide it from ourselves, we cannot hide it from the world—a failure in regard to repressive legislation, will that other coercion, which it is possible to conceive, be more successful? I can, indeed, conceive, and in history we may point to circumstances in which, coercion of that kind, stern, resolute, consistent, might be, and has been, successful. But it requires, in my judgment, two essential conditions, and these are—the autocracy of Government and the secrecy of public transactions. With those conditions that kind of coercion to which I am referring might possibly succeed. But will it succeed in the light of day, and can it be administered by the people of England and Scotland against the people of Ireland—by the two nations which, perhaps, above all others upon earth—I need hardly except America—best understand and are most fondly attached to the essential principles of liberty?

Now I enter upon another proposition to which I hardly expect broad exception can be taken. I will not assume—I will not beg—the question, whether the people of England and Scotland will ever administer that sort of effectual coercion which I have placed in contrast with our timid and hesitating, repressive measures; but this I will say, that the people of England and Scotland will never resort to that alternative until they have tried every other. Have they tried every other? Well, some we have tried, to which I will refer. I have been concerned with some of them myself. But we have not yet tried every alternative, because there is one—not unknown to human experience—on the contrary, widely known to various countries in the world where this dark and difficult problem has been solved by the comparatively natural and

simple, though not always easy, expedient of stripping law of its foreign garb and investing it with a domestic character. I am not saying that this will succeed; I by no means beg the question at this moment; but this I will say—that Ireland, as far as I know, and speaking of the great majority of the people of Ireland, believes it will succeed, and that experience elsewhere supports that conclusion. The case of Ireland, though she is represented here not less fully than England or Scotland, is not the same as that of England or Scotland. England, by her own strength and by her vast majority in this House, makes her own laws just as independently as if she were not combined with two other countries. Scotland—a small country, smaller than Ireland, but a country endowed with a spirit so masculine that never in the long course of history, excepting for two brief periods, each of a few years, was the superior strength of England such as to enable her to put down the national freedom beyond the border,—Scotland, wisely recognised by England, has been allowed and encouraged in this House to make her own laws as freely and as effectually as if she had a representation six times as strong. The consequence is that the mainspring of law in England is felt by the people to be English, the mainspring of law in Scotland is felt by the people to be Scotch; but the mainspring of law in Ireland is not felt by the people to be Irish, and I am bound to say—truth extorts from me the avowal—that it cannot be felt to be Irish in the same sense as it is English and Scotch. The net results of this statement which I have laid before the House, because it was necessary as the groundwork of my argument, are these—In the first place, I admit it to be little less than a mockery to hold that the state of law and of facts conjointly which I have endeavoured to describe conduces to the real unity of this great noble, and world-wide Empire. In the second place, something must be done, something is imperatively demanded from us, to restore to Ireland the first conditions of civil life—the free course of law, the liberty of every individual in the exercise of every legal right, the confidence of the people in the law and their sympathy with the law—apart from which no country can

be called, in the full sense of the word, a civilised country, nor can there be given to that country the blessings which it is the object of civilised society to attain. Well, this is my introduction to the task I have to perform; and now I ask attention to the problem we have before us.

It is a problem not unknown in the history of the world; it is really this—there can be no secret about it as far as we are concerned—how to reconcile Imperial unity with diversity of legislation. Mr Grattan not only held these purposes to be reconcilable, but he did not scruple to go the length of saying this—"I demand the continued severance of the Parliaments with a view to the continued and everlasting unity of the Empire." Was that a flight of rhetoric, an audacious paradox? No, it was the statement of a problem which other countries have solved, and under circumstances much more difficult than ours. We ourselves may be said to have solved it, for I do not think that any one will question the fact that, out of the six last centuries, for five centuries at least Ireland has had a parliament separate from ours. That is a fact undeniable. Did that separation of Parliament destroy the unity of the British Empire? Did it destroy it in the eighteenth century? Do not suppose that I mean that harmony always prevailed between Ireland and England. We know very well there were causes quite sufficient to account for a recurrence of discord. But I take the eighteenth century alone. Can I be told that there was no unity of empire in the eighteenth century? Why, sir, it was the century which saw our navy come to its supremacy. It was the century which witnessed the foundation of that great, gigantic manufacturing industry which now overshadows the whole world. It was, in a pre-eminent sense, the century of empire, and it was in a sense but too conspicuous, the century of wars. Those wars were carried on, that empire was maintained and enormously enlarged, that trade was established, that navy was brought to supremacy when England and Ireland had separate Parliaments. Am I to be told that there was no unity of empire in that state of things? Well, sir, what has happened elsewhere? Have

any other countries had to look this problem in the face? The last half century—the last sixty or seventy years since the great war—has been particularly rich in its experience of this subject and in the lessons which it has afforded to us. There are many cases to which I might refer to show how practicable it is, or how practicable it has been found by others whom we are not accustomed to look upon as our political superiors—how practicable it has been found by others to bring into existence what is termed local autonomy, and yet not to sacrifice, but to confirm Imperial unity.

Let us look to those two countries, neither of them very large, but yet countries which every Englishman and every Scotchman must rejoice to claim as his kin—I mean the Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Norway. Immediately after the great war in 1814 the Norwegians were ready to take sword in hand to prevent their coming under the domination of Sweden. But the Powers of Europe undertook the settlement of that question, and they united those countries upon a footing of strict legislative independence and co-equality. Now, I am not quoting this as an exact precedent for us, but I am quoting it as a precedent, and as an argument *à fortiori*, because I say they confronted much greater difficulties, and they had to put a far greater strain upon the unity of their country, than we can ever be called upon to put upon the unity of ours. The Legislatures of Sweden and of Norway are absolutely independent. The law even forbids—what I hope never will happen between England and Ireland—that a Swede, if I am correct in my impression, should bear office of any kind in the Norwegian Ministry. There is no sort of supremacy or superiority in the Legislature of Sweden over the Legislature of Norway. The Legislature of Norway has had serious controversies, not with Sweden, but with the King of Sweden, and it has fought out those controversies successfully upon the strictest Constitutional and Parliamentary grounds. And yet with two countries so united, what has been the effect? Not discord, not convulsions, not danger to peace, not hatred, not aversion, but a

constantly growing sympathy; and every man who knows their condition knows that I speak the truth when I say that in every year that passes the Norwegians and the Swedes are more and more feeling themselves to be the children of a common country, united by a tie which never is to be broken.

I will take another case—the case of Austria and Hungary. In Austria and Hungary there is a complete duality of power. I will not enter upon the general condition of the Austrian Empire, or upon the other divisions and diversities which it includes, but I will take simply this case. At Vienna sits the Parliament of the Austrian Monarchy; at Buda-Pesth sits the Parliament of the Hungarian Crown; and that is the state of things which was established, I think, nearly twenty years ago. I ask all those who hear me whether there is one among them who doubts? Whether or not the condition of Austria be at this moment, or be not, perfectly solid, secure, and harmonious, after the enormous difficulties she has had to confront on account of the boundless diversity of race, whether or not that condition be perfectly normal in every minute particular, this, at least, cannot be questioned, that it is a condition of solidity and of safety compared with the time when Hungary made war on her—war which she was unable to quell when she owed the cohesion of the body politic to the interference of Russian arms; or in the interval that followed when there existed a perfect legislative union and a supreme Imperial Council sat in Vienna.

Now, I have quoted these illustrations as illustrations which show, not that what we are called upon to consider can be done, but that infinitely more can be done—has been done—under circumstances far less favourable. What was the state of Sweden and Norway—two small countries, Norway undoubtedly inferior in population, but still unassailable in her mountain fastnesses—what was the case of Sweden and Norway for bringing about a union by physical and material means? There were no means to be used but moral means, and those moral means have been completely successful. What, again, was the case of Austria, where the seat of empire in the Archduchy was

associated not with the majority, but with the minority of the population, and where she had to face Hungary with numbers far greater than her own? Even there, while having to attempt what was infinitely more complex and more dangerous than even prejudice can suppose to be that which I am about to suggest, it is not to be denied that a great relative good and relative success have been attained. Our advantages are immense in a question of this kind. I do not know how many gentlemen who hear me have read the valuable work of Professor Dicey on the Law of the Constitution. No work that I have ever read brings out in a more distinct and emphatic manner the peculiarity of the British Constitution in one point, to which, perhaps, we seldom have occasion to refer—namely, the absolute supremacy of Parliament. We have a Parliament to the power of which there are no limits whatever, except such as human nature, in a divinely ordained condition of things, imposes. We are faced by no co-ordinate Legislatures, and are bound by no statutory conditions. There is nothing that controls us, and nothing that compels us, except our convictions of law, of right, and of justice. Surely that is a favourable point of departure in considering a question such as this.

I have referred to the eighteenth century. During that century you had beside you a co-ordinate Legislature. The Legislature of Ireland before the Union had the same title as that of Great Britain. There was no juridical distinction to be drawn between them. Even in point of antiquity they were as nearly as possible on a par, for the Parliament of Ireland had subsisted for 500 years. It had asserted its exclusive right to make laws for the people of Ireland. That right was never denied, for gentlemen ought to recollect, but all do not, perhaps, remember, that Poynings's Law¹ was an Irish Law imposed by Ireland on herself. That claim of the Parliament of Ireland never was denied until the reign of George I.;² and that claim denied in the reign of George I. was admitted in the reign of George III.³ The Parliament—the great Parliament of Great Britain—had

¹ 1494.² 1719.³ 1782.

to retract its words and to withdraw its claim, and the Legislature which goes by the name of Grattan's Parliament was as independent in point of authority as any Legislature over the wide world. We are not called upon to constitute another co-ordinate Legislature. While I think it is right to modify the Union in some particulars, we are not about to propose its repeal.

What is the essence of the Union? That is the question. It is impossible to determine what is and what is not the repeal of the Union, until you settle what is the essence of the Union. Well, I define the essence of the Union to be this—that before the Act of Union there were two independent, separate, co-ordinate Parliaments; after the Act of Union there was but one. A supreme statutory authority of the Imperial Parliament over Great Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, as one United Kingdom was established by the Act of Union. That supreme statutory authority it is not asked, so far as I am aware, and certainly it is not intended, in the slightest degree to impair. When I heard the hon. member for Cork,¹ in a very striking speech at the commencement of the Session, ask for what I think he termed local autonomy or Irish autonomy, I felt that something was gained in the conduct of this great question. If he speaks, as I believe he speaks, the mind of the vast majority of the representatives of Ireland, I feel that we have no right to question for a moment, in this free country, under a representative system, that the vast majority of the representatives speak the mind of a decided majority of the people. I felt, sir, that something had been gained. Ireland had come a great way to meet us, and it was more than ever our duty to consider whether we could not go some way to meet her. The term dismemberment of the Empire, as applied to anything that is now before us, is, in my judgment—I will not argue it at any length now—simply a misnomer. To speak, in connection with any meditated or possible plan, of the dismemberment of the Empire or the disintegration of the Empire is, in the face of

¹ Mr Parnell.

the history of the eighteenth century, not merely a misnomer, but an absurdity. Some phrases have been used which I will not refer to, simply because I do not think that they quite accurately describe the case, and because they might open a door to new debate. We hear of national independence, we hear of legislative independence, we hear of an independent Parliament, and we hear of federal arrangements. These are not descriptions which I adopt or which I find it necessary to discuss.

Then again, under a sense of the real necessities of the case, there are gentlemen who have their own philanthropic, well-intended plans for meeting this emergency. There are those who say, "Let us abolish the Castle;" and I think that gentlemen of very high authority, who are strongly opposed to giving Ireland a domestic Legislature, have said nevertheless that they think there ought to be a general reconstruction of the administrative Government in Ireland. Well, sir, I have considered that question much, and what I want to know is this—how, without a change in the Legislature, without giving to Ireland a domestic Legislature, there is to be, or there even can possibly be, a reconstruction of the Administration. We have sent to Ireland to administer the actual system the best men we could find. When Lord Spencer undertook that office, he represented, not in our belief merely, but in our knowledge—for we had known him long—the flower of the British aristocracy, that portion of the British aristocracy which to high birth and great influence of station unites a love of liberty and of the people as genuine as that which breathes within any cottage in the land. And yet, sir, what is the result? The result is that, after a life of almost unexampled devotion to the public service in Ireland, Lord Spencer's administration¹ not only does not command, which is easily understood, the adhesion and the commendation of the hon. member for Cork and his colleagues, but it is made the subject of cavil and of censure in this House of Parliament, and from the spot where I now stand,

¹ 1882-1885.

by members of the late Conservative Government. I want to know—for we have not come to our conclusions without making careful examination of the conclusions of other people—I want to know how it is possible to construct an administrative system in Ireland without legislative change, and what gentlemen mean when they speak of the administrative system of Ireland. The fault of the administrative system of Ireland, if it has a fault, is simply this—that its spring and source of action, or, if I can use an anatomical illustration without a blunder, what is called the motor muscle is English and not Irish. Without providing a domestic Legislature for Ireland, without having an Irish Parliament, I want to know how you will bring about this wonderful, superhuman, and, I believe, in this condition, impossible result that your administrative system shall be Irish and not English.

There have been several plans liberally advised for granting to Ireland the management of her education, the management of her public works, and the management of one subject and another—boons very important in themselves—under a central elective body; boons any of which I do not hesitate to say I should have been glad to see them accepted, or I should have been glad to see a trial given to a system which might have been constructed under them, had it been the desire and the demand of Ireland. I do not think such a scheme would have possessed the advantage of finality. If it had been accepted and especially if it had been freely suggested from that quarter—by the Irish representatives—it might have furnished a useful *modus vivendi*. But it is absurd, in my opinion, to talk of the adoption of such a scheme in the face of two obstacles—first of all, that those whom it is intended to benefit do not want it, do not ask it, and refuse it; and, secondly, the obstacle, not less important, that all those who are fearful of giving a domestic Legislature to Ireland would naturally and emphatically, and rather justly, say: “We will not create your central board and palter with this question, because we feel certain that it will afford nothing in this world except a stage from which to agitate for a further concession, and because we see that by the

proposal you make you will not even attain the advantage of settling the question that is raised."

Well, sir, what we seek is the settlement of that question ; and we think that we find that settlement in the establishment, by the authority of Parliament, of a legislative body sitting in Dublin for the conduct of both legislation and administration under the conditions which may be prescribed by the Act defining Irish, as distinct from Imperial, affairs. There is the head and front of our offending. Let us proceed to examine the matter a little further. The essential conditions of any plan that Parliament can be asked or could be expected to entertain are, in my opinion, these:—The unity of the Empire must not be placed in jeopardy ; the safety and welfare of the whole—if there is an unfortunate conflict, which I do not believe—the welfare and security of the whole must be preferred to the security and advantage of the part. The political equality of the three countries must be maintained. They stand by statute on a footing of absolute equality, and that footing ought not to be altered or brought into question. There should be what I will at present term an equitable distribution of Imperial burdens.

Next I introduce a provision which may seem to be exceptional, but which, in the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, whose history unhappily has been one long chain of internal controversies as well as of external difficulties, is necessary in order that there may be reasonable safeguards for the minority. I am asked why there should be safeguards for the minority. Will not the minority in Ireland, as in other countries, be able to take care of itself? Are not free institutions, with absolute publicity, the best security that can be given to any minority? I know, sir, that in the long run our experience shows they are. After we have passed through the present critical period, and obviated and disarmed, if we can, the jealousies with which any change is attended, I believe, as most gentlemen in this House may probably believe, that there is nothing comparable to the healthy action of free discussion, and that a minority asserting in the face of day its natural rights is the best security

and guarantee for its retaining them. We have not reached that state of things. I may say, not entering into detail, there are three classes to whom we must look in this case. We must consider—I will not say more on that subject to-day—the class immediately connected with the land. A second question, not, I think, offering any great difficulty, relates to the Civil Service and the offices of the Executive Government in Ireland. The third question relates to what is commonly called the Protestant minority, and especially that important part of the community which inhabits the province of Ulster, or which predominates in a considerable portion of the province of Ulster.

I will deviate from my path for a moment to say a word upon the state of opinion in that wealthy, intelligent, and energetic portion of the Irish community which, as I have said, predominates in a certain portion of Ulster. Our duty is to adhere to sound general principles, and to give the utmost consideration we can to the opinions of that energetic minority. The first thing of all, I should say, is that if, upon any occasion, by any individual or section, violent measures have been threatened in certain emergencies, I think the best compliment I can pay to those who have threatened us is to take no notice whatever of the threats, but to treat them as momentary ebullitions, which will pass away with the fears from which they spring, and at the same time to adopt on our part every reasonable measure for disarming those fears. I cannot conceal the conviction that the voice of Ireland, as a whole, is at this moment clearly and constitutionally spoken. I cannot say it is otherwise when five-sixths of its lawfully-chosen representatives are of one mind in this matter. There is a counter voice; and I wish to know what is the claim of those by whom that counter voice is spoken, and how much is the scope and allowance we can give them. Certainly, sir, I cannot allow it to be said that a Protestant minority in Ulster, or elsewhere, is to rule the question at large for Ireland. I am aware of no constitutional doctrine tolerable on which such a conclusion could be adopted or justified. But I think that the Protestant minority should

have its wishes considered to the utmost practicable extent in any form which they may assume.

Various schemes, short of refusing the demand of Ireland at large, have been proposed on behalf of Ulster. One scheme is that Ulster itself, or, perhaps with more appearance of reason, a portion of Ulster, should be excluded from the operation of the Bill we are about to introduce. Another scheme is that a separate autonomy should be provided for Ulster, or for a portion of Ulster. Another scheme is that certain rights with regard to certain subjects—such, for example, as education and some other subjects—should be reserved and should be placed to a certain extent under the control of Provincial Councils. These, I think, are the suggestions which have reached me in different shapes; there may be others. But what I wish to say of them is this,—there is no one of them which has appeared to us to be so completely justified, either upon its merits or by the weight of opinion supporting and recommending it, as to warrant our including it in the Bill and proposing it to Parliament upon our responsibility. What we think is that such suggestions deserve careful and unprejudiced consideration. It may be that that free discussion, which I have no doubt will largely take place after a Bill such as we propose shall have been laid on the table of the House, may give to one of these proposals, or to some other proposals, a practicable form, and that some such plan may be found to be recommended by a general or predominating approval. If it should be so, it will, at our hands, have the most favourable consideration, with every disposition to do what equity may appear to recommend. That is what I have to say on the subject of Ulster.

I have spoken now of the essential conditions of a good plan for Ireland, and I add only this—that in order to be a good plan it must be a plan promising to be a real settlement of Ireland. To show that without a good plan you can have no real settlement, I may point to the fact that the great settlement of 1782 was not a real settlement. Most unhappily, sir, it was not a real settlement; and why was it not a real settlement? Was it lie-

land that prevented it from being a real settlement? No, sir, it was the mistaken policy of England, listening to the pernicious voice and claims of ascendancy. It is impossible, however, not to say this word for the Protestant Parliament of Ireland. Founded as it was upon narrow suffrage, exclusive in religion, crowded with pensioners and place-holders holding every advantage, it yet had in it the spark, at least, and the spirit of true patriotism. It emancipated the Roman Catholics of Ireland when the Roman Catholics of England were not yet emancipated. It received Lord Fitzwilliam with open arms; and when Lord Fitzwilliam promoted to the best of his ability the introduction of Roman Catholics into Parliament, and when his brief career was unhappily intercepted by a peremptory recall from England, what happened? Why, sir, in both Houses of the Irish Parliament votes were at once passed by those Protestants, by those men, mixed as they were, with so large an infusion of pensioners and of placemen, registering their confidence in that nobleman and desiring that he should still be left to administer the government of Ireland. What the Irish Parliament did when Lord Fitzwilliam was promoting the admission of Roman Catholics into Parliament justifies me in saying there was a spirit there which, if free scope had been left to it, would in all probability have been enabled to work out a happy solution for every Irish problem and difficulty, and would have saved to the coming generation an infinity of controversy and trouble.

I pass on to ask how are we to set about the giving effect to the proposition I have made, to the purpose I have defined, of establishing in Ireland a domestic Legislature to deal with Irish as contradistinguished from Imperial affairs? And here, sir, I am confronted at the outset by what we have felt to be a formidable dilemma. I will endeavour to state and to explain it to the House as well as I can. Ireland is to have a domestic Legislature for Irish affairs. That is my postulate from which I set out. Are Irish members in this House, are Irish representative peers in the other House, still to continue to form part

of the respective Assemblies? That is the first question which meets us in consideration of the ground I have opened. Now I think it will be perfectly clear that if Ireland is to have a domestic Legislature, Irish peers and Irish representatives cannot come here to control English and Scotch affairs. That I understand to be admitted freely. I never heard of their urging the contrary, and I am inclined to believe that it would be universally admitted. The one thing follows from the other. There cannot be a domestic Legislature in Ireland dealing with Irish affairs, and Irish peers and Irish representatives sitting in Parliament at Westminster to take part in English and Scotch affairs. My next question is, Is it practicable for Irish representatives to come here for the settlement, not of English and Scotch, but of Imperial affairs? In principle it would be very difficult, I think, to object to that proposition. But then its acceptance depends entirely upon our arriving at the conclusion that in this House we can draw for practical purposes a distinction between affairs which are Imperial and affairs which are not Imperial. It would not be difficult to say in principle that as the Irish Legislature will have nothing to do with Imperial concerns let Irish members come here and vote on Imperial concerns. All depends on the practicability of the distinction. Well, sir, I have thought much, reasoned much, and inquired much, with regard to that distinction. I had hoped it might be possible to draw a distinction, and I have arrived at the conclusion that it cannot be drawn. I believe it passes the wit of man; at any rate it passes not my wit alone but the wit of many with whom I have communicated. It would be easy to exhibit a case; but the difficulty, I may say, in my opinion, arises from this. If this were a merely legislative House, or if the House of Lords were merely a legislative House—this House, of course, affords the best illustration—I do not think it would be difficult to draw a distinction. We are going to draw the distinction—we have drawn the distinction—in the Bill which I ask leave to lay on the table for legislative purposes with reference to what I hope will be the domestic Legislature of Ireland. But this House is not merely a legislative House; it

is a House controlling the Executive; and when you come to the control of the Executive, then your distinction between Imperial subjects and non-Imperial subjects totally breaks down—they are totally insufficient to cover the whole case.

For example, suppose it to be a question of foreign policy. Suppose the Irish members in this House coming here to vote on a question of foreign policy. Is it possible to deny that they would be entitled to take part in discussing an Address to the Crown for the dismissal of the Foreign Minister? It is totally impossible to deny—it is totally impossible to separate—the right of impugning the policy of and the right of action against the Minister. Well, sir, if on that account members might take part in an Address dismissing the Foreign Minister, I want to know, considering the collective responsibility of Government—a principle, I hope, which will always be maintained at the very highest level that circumstances will permit, for I am satisfied that the public honour and the public welfare are closely associated with it—if that be so, what will be the effect of the dismissal of the Foreign Minister on the existence and action of the Government to which he belongs? Why, sir, the Government in nineteen cases out of twenty will break down with the Foreign Minister; and when these gentlemen, coming here for the purpose of discussing Imperial questions alone, could dislodge the Government which is charged with the entire interests of England and Scotland, I ask you what becomes of the distinction between Imperial and non-Imperial affairs? I believe the distinction to be impossible, and therefore I arrive at the next conclusion—that Irish members and Irish peers cannot, if a domestic Legislature be given to Ireland, justly retain a seat in the Parliament at Westminster.

If Irish members do not sit in this House and Irish peers do not sit in the other House, how is Ireland to be taxed? I shall assume, as a matter of course, that we should propose that a general power of taxation should pass to the domestic Legislature of Ireland. But there is one very important branch of taxation, involving, indeed, a second branch, which is susceptible

of being viewed in a very different aspect from the taxes of Ireland generally. I mean the duties of customs and duties of excise relatively to customs. One thing I take to be absolutely certain. Great Britain will never force upon Ireland taxation without representation. Well, sir, if we are never to force upon Ireland taxation without representation, then comes another question of the deepest practical interest—are we to give up the fiscal unity of the Empire? I sometimes see it argued that, in giving up the fiscal unity of the Empire, we should give up the unity of the Empire. To that argument I do not subscribe. The unity of the Empire rests upon the supremacy of Parliament and on considerations much higher than considerations merely fiscal. But I must admit that, while I cannot stand on the high ground of principle, yet on the very substantial ground of practice to give up the fiscal unity of the Empire would be a very great public inconvenience and a very great public misfortune—a very great public misfortune for Great Britain; and I believe it would be a still greater misfortune for Ireland were the fiscal unity of the Empire to be put to hazard and practically abandoned. I may say also, looking as I do with hope to the success of the measure I now propose, I, at any rate, feel the highest obligation not to do anything, not to propose anything, without necessity that would greatly endanger the right comprehension of this subject by the people of England and Scotland, which might be the case were the fiscal unity of the Empire to be broken.

There is the dilemma. I conceive that there is but one escape from it, and that is, if there were conditions upon which Ireland consented to such arrangements as would leave the authority of levying customs duties, and such excise duties as are immediately connected with customs, in the hands of Parliament here, and would by her will consent to set our hands free to take the course that the general exigencies of the case appear to require. These conditions I take to be three:—In the first place, that a general power of taxation over and above these particular duties should pass unequivocally

into the hands of the domestic Legislature of Ireland. In the second place, that the entire proceeds of the customs and excise should be held for the benefit of Ireland, for the discharge of the obligations of Ireland, and for the payment of the balance, after discharging those obligations, into an Irish Exchequer, to remain at the free disposal of the Irish legislative body.

But there is another point which I think ought to engage, and may justly engage, the anxious attention in particular of the representatives of Ireland; and it is this:—The proposal which I have now sketched is that we should pass an Act giving to Ireland what she considers an enormous boon, under the name of a Statutory Parliament for the control of Irish affairs, both legislative and administrative. But one of the provisions of that Act is the withdrawal of Irish representative peers from the House of Lords, and Irish members from the House of Commons. Well, then, I think it will naturally occur to the Irish, as it would in parallel circumstances to the Scotch or the English—and more especially to the Scotch—mind, what would become of the privileges conveyed by the Act after the Scotch members, who were their natural guardians, were withdrawn from Parliament? I was speaking of the Scotch members in order to bring it very distinctly to the minds of hon. members, supposing that Scotland had entertained—what she never had reason to entertain—the desire for a domestic Legislature. I must confess I think that Ireland ought to have security on that subject—security that advantage would not be taken, so far as we can preclude the possibility of it, of the absence of Irish representatives from Parliament for the purpose of tampering with any portion of the boon which we propose to confer on Ireland by this Act. I think we have found a method for dealing with that difficulty. I may be very sanguine, but I hope that the day may come when Ireland will have reason to look on this Act, if adopted by Parliament, as for practical purposes her Magna Charta. A Magna Charta for Ireland ought to be most jealously and

effectively assured, and it will be assured, against unhallowed and unlawful interference.

Two cases at once occur to the mind. There might be alterations of detail in a law of this kind on which everybody might be agreed. We think it would be very absurd to require either the construction or reconstruction of a cumbrous and difficult machinery for the purpose of disposing of cases of this kind, and therefore we propose that the provisions of this Act might be modified with the concurrence of the Irish Legislature, or in conformity with an Address from the Irish Legislature. That is intended for cases where there is a general agreement. I hope it will not happen, but I admit it might happen, that in some point or other the foresight and sagacity now brought to bear on this subject might prove insufficient. It is possible, though I trust it is not probable, that material alterations might be found requisite, that on these amendments there might be differences of opinion; and yet, however improbable the case may be, it is a case which it might be proper to provide for beforehand. What we then should propose is that the provisions of this Act should not be altered, except either on an Address from the Irish Legislature to the Crown such as I have described, or else, after replacing and recalling into action the full machinery under which Irish representatives now sit here, and Irish peers sit in the House of Lords, so that when their case again came to be tried they might have the very same means of defending their constitutional rights as they have now. Now, we believe that is one of those cases which are often best averted by making a good provision against them.

Now, upon the footing which I have endeavoured to describe, we propose to relieve Irish peers and representatives from attendance at Westminster, and at the same time to preserve absolutely the fiscal unity of the Empire. Let me say that there are several reasons that occur to me which might well incline the prudence of Irishmen to adopt an arrangement of this kind. If there were Irish representatives in this House at

the same time that a domestic Legislature sat in Ireland, I think that the presence of those Irish representatives would have some tendency to disparage the domestic Legislature. I think there would be serious difficulties that would arise besides the insurmountable difficulty that I have pointed out as to the division of subjects. Even if it were possible to divide the subjects, what an anomaly it would be, what a mutilation of all our elementary ideas about the absolute equality of members in this House, were we to have ordinarily among us two classes of members, one of them qualified to vote on all kinds of business and another qualified only to vote here and there on particular kinds of business, and obliged to submit to some criterion or other—say the authority of the Chair—novel for such a purpose and difficult to exercise—in order to determine what kinds of business they could vote upon, and what kinds of business they must abstain from voting on! There would, I think, be another difficulty in determining what the number of those members should be. My opinion is that there would be great jealousy of the habitual presence of 103 Irish members in this House, even for limited purposes, after a legislative body had been constructed in Ireland; and on the other hand I can very well conceive that Ireland would exceedingly object to the reduction—the material reduction—of those members. I am sorry to have to mention another difficulty, which is this—Ireland has not had the practice in local self-government that has been given to England and Scotland. We have unfortunately shut her out from that experience. In some respects we have been jealous, in others niggardly towards Ireland. It might be very difficult for Ireland in the present state of things to man a Legislative Chamber in Dublin, and at the same time to present in this House an array of so much distinguished ability as I think all parties will admit has been exhibited on the part of Ireland during recent Parliaments on the benches of this House.

But I pass on from this portion of the question, having referred to these two initiatory propositions as principal parts

of the foundation of the Bill—namely, first, that it is proposed that the Irish Representation in Parliament at Westminster should cease unless in the contingent, and I hope hardly possible case to which I have alluded, and next that the fiscal unity of the Empire shall be absolutely maintained. My next duty is to state what the powers of the proposed legislative body will be.

The capital article of that legislative body will be that it should have the control of the Executive Government of Ireland as well as of legislative business. Evidently, I think, it was a flaw in the system of 1782 that adequate provision was not made for that purpose, and we should not like to leave a flaw of such a nature in the work we are now undertaking. In 1782 there were difficulties that we have not now before us. At that time it might have been very fairly said that no one could tell how a separate Legislature would work unless it had under its control what is termed a responsible Government. We have no such difficulty and no such excuse now. The problem of responsible government has been solved for us in our Colonies. It works very well there; and in perhaps a dozen cases in different quarters of the globe it works to our perfect satisfaction. It may be interesting to the House if I recount the fact that that responsible government in the Colonies was, I think, first established by one of our most distinguished statesmen, Earl Russell, when he held the office of Colonial Secretary in the Government of Lord Melbourne. But it was a complete departure from established tradition, and if I remember right, not more than two or three years before that generous and wise experiment was tried Lord Russell had himself written a most able despatch to show that it could not be done; that with responsible government in the Colonies you would have two centres of gravity and two sources of motion in the Empire; while a united Empire absolutely required that there should be but one, and that consequently the proposition could not be entertained. Such was the view of the question while it was yet at a distance, and such perhaps may have been our view on the subject I am now discussing while it was yet at a distance. But it has been brought near to us by the circumstances of

the late election, and I believe that if we look closely at its particulars we should find that many of the fears with which we may have regarded it are perfectly unreal, and especially so that great panic, that great apprehension of all, the fear lest it should prove injurious to what it is our first duty to maintain—namely, the absolute unity and integrity of the Empire.

There is another point in regard to the powers of the legislative body of which I wish to make specific mention. Two courses might have been followed. One would be to endow this legislative body with particular legislative powers. The other is to except from the sphere of its action those subjects which we think ought to be excepted, and to leave it everything else which is the consequence of the plans before us. There will be an enumeration of disabilities, and everything not included in that enumeration will be left open to the domestic Legislature. As I have already said, the administrative power by a responsible Government would pass under our proposals with the legislative power. Then, sir, the legislative body would be subject to the provisions of the Act in the first place as to its own composition. But we propose to introduce into it what I would generally explain as two orders, though not two Houses; and we suggest that with regard to the popular order, which will be the more numerous, the provisions of the Act may be altered at any period after the first dissolution; but with regard to the other and less numerous order, the provisions of the Act can only be altered after the assent of the Crown to an address from the legislative body for that purpose. We should provide generally—and on that I conceive there would be no difference of opinion—that this body should be subject to all the prerogatives of the Crown, but only should insert a particular provision to the effect that its *maximum* duration, without dissolution, should not exceed five years.

I will now tell the House—and I would beg particular attention to this—what are the functions that we propose to withdraw from the cognizance of this legislative body. The

three grand and principal functions are, first, everything that relates to the Crown—succession, prerogatives, and the mode of administering powers during incapacity, regency, and, in fact, all that belongs to the Crown. The next would be all that belongs to defence—the Army, the Navy, the entire organisation of armed force. I do not say the police force, which I will touch upon by-and-by, but everything belonging to defence. And the third would be the entire subject of Foreign and Colonial relations. Those are the subjects most properly Imperial, and I will say belonging as a principle to the Legislature established under the Act of Union and sitting at Westminster. There are some other subjects which I will briefly touch upon. In the first place, it would not be competent to the domestic Legislature in Ireland to alter the provisions of the Act which we are now about to pass, as I hope, and which I ask that we should pass with the consent of the three countries—it would not be competent to the Irish legislative body to alter those provisions, excepting in points where they are designedly left open as part of the original contract and settlement. We do not propose universal disability as to contracts, but there are certain contracts made in Ireland under circumstances so peculiar that we think we ought to except them from the action of the legislative body. There are also some analogous provisions made in respect to charters anterior to the Act which in our opinion ought only to be alterable after the assent of the Crown to an address from the legislative body for that purpose. There is another disability that we propose to lay upon the legislative body; and it is one of those with respect to which I am bound to say in my belief there is no real apprehension that the thing would be done, but at the same time, though there may not be a warranted apprehension, there are many honest apprehensions which it is our duty to consider as far as we can. We propose to provide that the legislative body should not be competent to pass a law for the establishment or the endowment of any particular religion. Those I may call exceptions of principle. Then there are exceptions of what I may call practical necessity for ordinary purposes. The

first of those is the law of trade and navigation. I assume that as to trade and navigation at large, it would be a great calamity to Ireland to be separated from Great Britain. The question of taxation in relation to trade and navigation I have already mentioned. The same observation applies to the subject of coinage and legal tender, but we do not propose to use the term "currency," simply because there is an ambiguity about it. Ireland might think fit to pass a law providing for the extinction of private issues in Ireland, and that no bank-notes should be issued in Ireland except under the authority and for the advantage of the State. I own it is my opinion that Ireland would do an extremely sensible thing if she passed such a law. It is my most strong and decided opinion that we ought to have the same law ourselves, but the block of business has prevented that and many other good things towards the attainment of which I hope we are now going to open and clear the way. I only use that as an illustration to show that I should be very sorry if we were needlessly to limit the free action of the Irish legislature upon Irish matters. There are other subjects on which I will not dwell. One of them is the subject of weights and measures; another is the subject of, copyright. These are not matters for discussion at the present moment.

There is, however, one other important subject with regard to which we propose to leave it entirely open to the judgment of Ireland—that subject is the Post Office. Our opinion is that it would be for the convenience of both countries if the Post Office were to remain under the control of the Postmaster General; but the Post Office requires an army of servants, and I think that Ireland might not wish to see all the regulations connected with that unarmed army left to an English authority. We have, therefore, placed the Post Office in the Bill under circumstances which would enable the legislative body in Ireland to claim for itself authority on this subject if it should see fit. There are some other matters, such as the quarantine laws, and one or two others which stand in the same category. Now, sir, that I believe I may give as a sufficient description of the exceptions from the legislative action of the proposed Irish Legislature,

bearing in mind the proposition that everything which is not excepted is conferred.

I have dealt with the powers of the legislative body.

I come next to the composition of the legislative body. We propose to provide for it as follows. I have referred to the protection of minorities. We might constitute a legislative body in Ireland by a very brief enactment if we were to say that the 103 members now representing Ireland and 103 more members, perhaps elected by the same constituencies, should constitute the one and only legislative House in Ireland without the introduction of what I may call the dual element. But, sir, we are of opinion that if a proposition of that kind were made, in the first place, it would be stated that it did not afford legitimate protection for minorities. And, in the second place, it might be thought by many of those who would be less sensitive on the subject of minorities that some greater provision was required for stability and consistency in the conduct of the complex work of legislation than could possibly be supplied by a single set of men elected under an absolutely single influence. Upon that account, sir, we propose to introduce into this legislative body what we have termed two orders. These orders would sit and deliberate together. There would be a power on the demand of either order for separate voting. The effect of that separate voting would be that while the veto was in force, while it sufficed to bar the enactment of a Bill, there would be an absolute veto of one order upon the other. Such veto, in our view, might be salutary and useful for the purpose of insuring deliberation and consistency with adequate consideration in the business of making laws. But it ought not to be perpetual. If it were perpetual, a block would arise, as it might arise conceivably, and as really, we may almost say, we have seen it arise in certain cases in the Colonies, particularly in one¹ where there were two perfectly independent orders. What we therefore, propose is that this veto can only be operative for a

¹ In 1832 the House of Assembly in Lower Canada stopped the supplies.

limited time, say until a dissolution, or for a period of three years, whichever might be the longer of the two.

So much, sir, for the relation of these two orders, the one to the other. I may observe that that distinction of orders would be available and is almost necessary with a view to maintaining the only form of control over the judicial body known to us in this country—viz., the concurrence of two authorities chosen under somewhat different influences in one common conclusion with regard to the propriety of removing a Judge from his office.

Now, sir, I will just describe very briefly the composition of these orders. It may not have occurred to many gentlemen that, if we succeed in the path we are now opening, with respect to the twenty-eight distinguished individuals who now occupy the place of representative peers of Ireland, it will not be possible, we think, for them to continue to hold their places in the House of Lords after the Irish representatives have been removed from attending the House of Commons. I do not say that the precedent is an exact one, but the House may remember that in the case of the disestablishment of the Irish Church we did disable the Bishops who were entitled to sit for life from continuing—I mean disable them personally from continuing—to sit in the House of Lords after the disestablishment of the Irish Church. We do not wish, sir, to entail this personal disability. We propose that these twenty-eight peers shall have the option of sitting, if they think fit, as a portion of the first order in the Irish legislative assembly. And that they shall have the power—that they shall personally have the power—of sitting there, as they sit in the House of Lords, for life. There may, sir, be those who think this option will not be largely used. I am not one of that number. I believe that the Irish peers have an Irish as well as an Imperial patriotism. In the eighteenth century Irish peers were not ashamed of the part they played in the Irish Parliament. It was, I think, the Duke of Leinster who moved the Address in the Irish House of Peers, which he carried, expressing the

confidence of that House in Lord Fitzwilliam. I may be too sanguine, but I say boldly that if this measure pass under happy circumstances, especially if it pass without political exasperation, one of its effects will be a great revival of the local as well as a great confirmation and extension of Imperial patriotism. At any rate it is our duty, I think, to provide that the Irish peers, the twenty-eight representative Irish peers, may form part of the Irish legislative body. There will be no disability entailed upon any Irish peer from being at once a member of the Irish legislative body and likewise of the House of Lords. In the last century many distinguished men sat in both, and in the circumstances we certainly see no cause for putting an end to the double qualification which was thus enjoyed, and which, I think, worked beneficially. There is a difficulty, however, to which I will just advert for one moment in combining the connexion or place of these twenty-eight peers who are to sit for life with the rest of the first order of the Chamber. We propose as to the remainder of the first order that it shall consist of seventy-five members, to be elected by the Irish people under conditions which we propose to specify in the schedule to the Act, not yet filled up as to its details. But I mention at once the two provisions which would apply to the election of seventy-five members. First of all, the constituency would be a constituency composed of persons occupying to the value of £25 and upwards, and secondly, they would be elected for a period, as a general rule, of ten years, with a little exception I need not now refer to. Thirdly, they will be elected subject to a property qualification of realty to the extent of £200 a-year, or of personalty to the extent of £200 a-year, or a capital value of £4000. The peers would ultimately be replaced by twenty-eight members, elected under the above conditions. We cannot insure that all these twenty-eight peers shall die at the same time: it would, consequently, be extremely difficult to devise an electoral machinery for the purpose of supplying their places by election. We therefore propose to grant to the Crown power, limited to a term which we think may fairly well exhaust the present generation, of filling these

places by nomination, not for life, but down to the date to be fixed by the Act. After the system had ceased to operate, and the representative peers had ceased to be in that first order, the first order of the legislative body would be elected entirely upon the basis I have described.

With regard to the second order, its composition would be simple. Of course, it would be proposed to the 103 gentlemen who now represent Ireland in this House from county districts, from citizen towns, and from the University of Dublin, that they should take their places in the Irish Legislative Chamber in Dublin. We should likewise propose as nearly as possible to duplicate that body. Another 101 members, not 103, we propose should be elected by the county districts and the citizen towns in exactly the same manner as that in which the present 101 members for counties and towns have been elected. We shall also propose that in the event of any refusal to sit, refusals to accept the option given, the place shall be filled up by election under the machinery now existing. I ought to say a word about Dublin University. We do not propose to interfere by any action of ours with the existing arrangements of Dublin University in one way or another. But certainly we could not ask the House to adopt a plan at our suggestion which would double the representation of Dublin University. We propose to leave it as it is, but at the same time to empower the legislative body, if it should think fit, to appoint a corresponding representation by two members in favour of the Royal University of Ireland. There would be no compulsion to exercise that power, but it would be left to the discretion of the legislative body. The effect of that would be to give to the first order of the proposed Legislative Chamber, or body, a number making 103; to give to the second order the number of 206 at the outside, or 204 if the power with regard to the Royal University were not exercised, and to leave the relations of the two orders upon the footing which I have described.

I must now say a few words upon the subject of the

Executive, and what we think most requisite with regard to the Executive is that our Act should be as elastic as possible. It is quite evident that though the legislative transition can be made, and ought to be made, *per saltum*, by a single stroke, the Executive transition must necessarily be gradual. We propose, therefore, sir, to leave everything as it is until it is altered in the regular course; so that there shall be no breach of continuity in the government of the country, but that by degrees, as may be arranged by persons whom we feel convinced will meet together in a spirit of co-operation, and will find no great, much less insurmountable, difficulty in their way, the old state of things shall be adjusted to the new. On the one hand, the representatives of the old system will remain on the ground; on the other hand, the principle of responsible government is freely and fully conceded. That principle of responsible government will work itself out in every necessary detail. It has often, sir, been proposed to abolish the Viceroyalty, and some gentlemen have even been sanguine enough to believe that to abolish the Viceroyalty was to solve the whole Irish problem. I must say that I think that that involves a faculty of belief far beyond any power either of the understanding or imagination to which I have ever been able to aspire. We propose to leave the Viceroyalty without interference by the Act, except in the particulars which I am about to name. The office of the Viceroyalty will only be altered by statute. He would not be the representative of a party. He would not quit office with the outgoing Government. He would have round him, as he has now, in a certain form, a Privy Council, to aid and to advise him. Within that Privy Council the executive body would form itself under the action of the principle of responsible Government for the purpose of administering the various offices of the State. The Queen would be empowered to delegate to him in case his office should be permanently continued—which I am far from believing to be unlikely—any of the prerogatives which she now enjoys, or which she would exercise under this Act: and finally, we have not forgotten that his office almost alone is still effected by one solitary outstand-

ing religious disability—a kind of Lot's wife when everything else has been destroyed—and that religious disability we propose by our Bill to remove.

The next point is with regard to the Judges of the superior Courts, and here I draw a partial distinction between the present and the future Judges. As regards the Judges of the superior Courts now holding office, we desire to secure to them their position and their emoluments in the same absolute form as that in which they now exist. Although they would become chargeable upon the Consolidated Fund of Ireland, which we propose to constitute by the Act, still they would retain their lien—so to call it—on the Consolidated Fund of Great Britain. Under the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, we cannot forget that some of these Judges, by no fault of their own, have been placed in relations more or less uneasy with popular influences, and with what under the new Constitution will in all probability be the dominating influence in that country. We cannot overlook the peculiarities of Irish history in framing the provisions of this Bill, and we therefore propose, both with regard to the Judges now holding office and with regard to other persons who in what they deemed loyal service to the Empire have been concerned in the administration and conduct of the criminal law in Ireland, that Her Majesty may, not lightly or wholesale, but if she should see cause on any particular occasion, by order in Council, antedate the pensions of these particular persons. With regard to the future Judges we hold the matter to be more simple. We propose to provide that they should hold office during good behaviour, that their salaries—these are the superior Judges alone—should be charged on the Irish Consolidated Fund, that they shall be removable only on a joint address from the two orders of the legislative body, and that they should be appointed under the influence, as a general rule, of the responsible Irish Government. There is an exception which we propose to make in regard to the Court of Exchequer, which is a Court of Revenue Pleas. I will not enter into any details now, but the enormous financial relations which will

subsist between Great Britain and Ireland if our measure be carried made us feel, for reasons which I shall perhaps on another occasion more fully explain, that it is necessary for us to keep a certain amount of hold on the Court of Exchequer, or, at least, on two of its members; but the general rule of our measure will be that the action of the Judges will pass under the new Irish Executive, and will rest with them, just as it rested in former times with the old Irish Executive.

I must now say a few words on the important subject of the Irish Constabulary. The substance of those words really amounts to this—that I think there remains much for consideration in order to devise the details of a good and prudent system; but we think it our first duty to give a distinct assurance to the present members of that distinguished and admirable force that their condition will not be put to prejudice by this Act, either in respect of their terms of office, their terms of service, or with regard to the authority under which they are employed. The case of the Dublin police is not quite the same, but we propose the same conditions with regard to the Dublin police, as far, at least, as the terms of service are concerned. With regard to the local police I will say nothing, because I do not want at present to anticipate what may be matter hereafter for free consideration or discussion, or for the action of the Irish legislative body. There will be no breach of continuity in the administration with regard to the police. One thing I cannot omit to say. The constabulary, as I have said, is an admirable force, and I do not intend to qualify in the smallest degree what I have already said, but the constabulary on its present footing exhibits one of the most remarkable instances of waste of treasure and of enormous expense, not with good results, but with unhappy results, with which and under which the civil government and the general government of Ireland have hitherto been carried on. The total charge of the constabulary amounts to a million and a-half, including the Dublin police. Now, Ireland is a cheaper country than England, and if the service were founded on the same principle and organized in the same

manner, it ought, per thousand of the population, to be cheaper in Ireland than in England, assuming Ireland to be in a normal condition; and our object is to bring it into a normal condition.

Now the House will perhaps be surprised when I tell them this. The present constabulary of Ireland costs £1,500,000 a-year, every penny of it now paid out of the British Exchequer. If the police of Ireland were organized upon the same principles and on the same terms as the police in England, instead of costing £1,500,000, it would cost £600,000 a-year. That will convey to the House an idea, first, of the enormous charge at which we have been governing Ireland under our present system, and, secondly, of the vast field for judicious reductions which the system I am now proposing ought to offer to the Irish people. I anticipate a vast reduction, both in the force and in the expenditure. The charge is now a million and a-half. We propose that the Consolidated Fund of Great Britain—this subject I shall revert to in the financial statement which I shall have to put before the House—shall for a time relieve the Irish legislative body of all expenditure in excess of a million. I am bound to say that I do not look upon a million as the proper charge to be imposed on Ireland. I am perfectly convinced, however, that the charge will be reduced to a much smaller sum, of which Ireland, of course, will reap the benefit. After two years the legislative body may fix the charge for the whole police and for the constabulary of Ireland, with a saving of existing rights. One thing I must say. We have no desire to exempt the police of Ireland in its final form from the ultimate control of the legislative body. We have no jealousies on the subject; and I own I have a strong personal opinion that when once the recollection of the old antipathies has been effectually abated, the care of providing for the ordinary security of life and property of the citizens will be regarded as the very first duty of any good local Government in Ireland. I think it will be understood from what I have stated that the constabulary would remain under the present terms of service and under the present authority, although I do not say

that this is to be so for ever. Assuming control over the constabulary, that control will be prospective, and will not import any injury to existing rights.

With respect to the Civil Service, of course the future Civil Service of the country generally will be absolutely under the legislative body. With respect to the present Civil Service, we have not thought that their case was exactly analogous either to the constabulary or the judicial offices, and yet it is a great transition, and moreover it will without doubt be the desire of the legislative body of Ireland forthwith, or very early, to effect a great economy in its establishment. We have, therefore, considered to some extent in what way we can at once provide what is just for the civil servants of Ireland, and at the same time set free the hands of the legislative body to proceed with this salutary work of economy and retrenchment. Our opinion is that, upon the whole, it will be wise in the joint interests of both to authorise the civil servants now serving to claim the gratuity or pension which would be due to them upon the abolition of their offices, provided they shall serve not less than two years to prevent an inconvenient lapse in the practical business of the country, and at the close of those two years both parties would be free to negotiate afresh, the civil servants not being bound to remain and the legislative body not being in any way bound to continue to employ them. That is all I have to say upon the subject of the new Irish Constitution.

I am afraid I have still many subjects on which I have some details to show, and I fear I have already detained the House too long. I have now, Sir, to give a practical exposition of the phrase which I have used that we looked upon it as an essential condition of our plan that there should be an equitable distribution of Imperial charges. The meaning of that is, what proportion shall Ireland pay? I must remind gentlemen before I enter upon the next explanation that the proportion to be paid is not the only thing to be considered; you have to consider the basis upon which that proportionate payment is to be applied. Looking upon the proportionate payment, we now

stand thus. At the time of the Union it was intended that Ireland should pay two-seventeenths, or in the relation of 1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ out of the total charge of the United Kingdom. The actual true payment now made by the Irish taxpayer is not 1 to $7\frac{1}{2}$, but something under 1 to 12, or about 1 to $11\frac{1}{2}$ —that is the total expenditure. The proposal I make is that the proportion chargeable to Ireland shall be 1 to 14, or one-fifteenth, but that will not be understood until I come to join it with other particulars. I will look, however, Sir, a little to the question, what are the best tests of capacity to pay? Many of these tests have been suggested—one of them is the income-tax, which I conceive to be a very imperfect indication. The income-tax, I believe, would give a proportion, not of 1 to 14, but of 1 to 19. This is to be borne in mind if you have regard to the income-tax, that while, on the one hand, it is paid in Ireland upon a lower valuation than in England or in Scotland—because, as we all know, in England Schedule A is levied on the full rent—it is also unquestionable that many Irishmen also hold securities upon which dividends are received in London and pay income-tax, I hope, before the dividends come into the hands of the persons entitled to them. Therefore it is almost a certainty that a considerable sum ought to be added to the Irish income-tax, which would raise it from the proportion of 1 to 19 to perhaps 1 to 17. But there are two other tests which I consider far superior to the income-tax. One is the test afforded us by the death duties, not by the amount levied, because the amounts levied vary capriciously according to the consanguinity scale, but by the property passing under the death duties. The amount of property on which, on an average of three years, the death duties fell was for Great Britain £170,000,000, and for Ireland £12,908,000, or 1 to 13. I have taken three years, because they represent the period since we entered upon a somewhat new administration of the death duties, and that is by far the best basis of comparison. When we come to the valuation, inasmuch as Ireland is valued much lower in proportion to the real value than England and Scotland, the valuation in the latest year for which we have returns is in

Great Britain £166,000,000, and for Ireland £13,833,000, giving a proportion of 1 to 12, or one-thirteenth.

Under these circumstances, what ought we to do? In my opinion, we ought to make for Ireland an equitable arrangement, and I think that when I propose to assume the proportion of one-fifteenth, it will be seen that that is an equitable or even generous arrangement, after I have mentioned three considerations. The first of these considerations is that if we start an Irish legislative body, we must start it with some balance to its credit. But if we are to start it with a balance to its credit, I know of no way except the solitary £20,000 a-year which still remains to be worked out of the Church surplus after all the demands made upon it. I know of no way of honestly manufacturing that balance except by carving it out of the Budget for the coming year, and providing for the sum at the expense, as it will then be, not of the Irish Exchequer exclusively, but at the expense of the English and Scotch tax-payers. That is one consideration; the second consideration is this. I take this one to fourteen or one-fifteenth for the purpose of ascertaining what share Ireland is to pay to the Imperial expenditure. But when I said that Ireland now pays 1 to $11\frac{1}{2}$ or 1 to $12\frac{1}{2}$ of the Imperial expenditure, I meant the amount of the whole gross Imperial expenditure; and when I say that we shall ask her to pay one-fifteenth of the Imperial expenditure in the future, that is an Imperial expenditure very materially cut down. For, upon consideration, it has been thought right in computing the military expenditure to exclude from it altogether what ought strictly to be called war charges. We do not propose to assume, in fixing the future Imperial contribution of Ireland, to base that calculation on the supposition of her sharing in charges analogous, for example, to the vote of credit for eleven millions last year. Therefore this proportion of one-fifteenth is to be applied to a scale of Imperial expenditure materially reduced.

But, Sir, there is another consideration which I think it right to mention. It is this—that this Imperial contribution

would be paid by Ireland out of a fund composed, in the first instance, of the entire receipts paid into the Irish Exchequer; but that, Sir, is not a true test of the amount of taxation paid by Ireland. There are goods which pay duty in England, and which are exported, duty paid, to Ireland, which are consumed in Ireland, and upon which, therefore, the duty is really paid by Irishmen, while the receipts go into the Imperial Exchequer. But there is not only a corresponding movement the other way, but there is a movement very much larger and more important. More than one million of duty, I think £1,030,000, is paid upon spirits in Ireland that are exported to Great Britain. Every shilling of that duty is really paid by the Englishman and the Scotchman; but at the same time the whole receipts go into the Irish Exchequer. The same thing holds with respect to the porter brewed in Ireland. The same thing holds with regard to the very considerable manufacture of tobacco carried on in Ireland. We have made it the object of our best efforts to ascertain how much money Ireland loses to England by the process which I have described—and which I have no doubt is accurately understood by all members of the House—how much money Ireland loses to Great Britain by the flow of duty-paid commodities from Great Britain to Ireland; and how much Great Britain loses to Ireland from the flow of such commodities from Ireland to Great Britain. The result of this investigation is—I state it with confidence, not actually as if it were to be demonstrated in every point by Parliamentary returns, but I state it as a matter of certainty with regard to a far greater portion of the sum, and as a matter certainly subject to very little doubt—that the Irish receipt gains from Great Britain by the process I have described more than Great Britain gains from Ireland, and more to no less an amount than £1,400,000, paid by the British taxpayer, and forming part of the Irish receipt. If you maintain the fiscal unity of the Empire, if you do not erect—which I trust you will not erect—Custom-houses between Great Britain and Ireland, if you let things take their natural course, according to the ordinary and natural movement of trade, £1,400,000 will be paid to the benefit of Ireland as a charge

upon the English and Scotch taxpayer, and will form a portion of the fund out of which Ireland will defray the Imperial contribution which we propose to levy upon her.

If this amount of Imperial contribution to be paid by Ireland, which I have described as one-fourteenth, comes to be reduced by subtracting this sum of £1,400,000, the portion which Ireland will have to pay will be, not one-fourteenth, but a fraction under one-twenty-sixth. That is a very great change. It is a benefit she gets not only in the state of the law, but owing to the course of trade. We cannot take it away without breaking up the present absolute freedom between the two countries. I hope this will be borne in mind by those who think this charge of one-fifteenth is a heavy charge to be thrown upon Ireland; and by those who think, as I certainly do, that in a case of this kind, after all that has occurred when two countries are very strong and very rich, compared with a third of far more restricted means, the pecuniary arrangements ought to be equitable and even bountiful in some moderate degree. It will be interesting to the House to know what payment *per capita* the plan I have described will allot to the Irishman and to the Briton respectively. I use the word "Briton" because I know that it will gratify my friends from Scotland. The incidence of this plan *per capita* I will state as follows. In the first place, if I were to take the present contribution of Ireland to the entire expenditure of the country according to the receipts of the two Exchequers, the inhabitant of Great Britain pays £2, 10s. *per capita*, and the inhabitant in Ireland £1, 13s. 7d. That is obviously and inequitably high for Ireland. But if I take the real payment of the Irish taxpayer, and compare that with the real payment of the English taxpayer, it will follow that the English payment is £2, 10s. 11d. as against £1, 7s. 10d. of Ireland, which is certainly a more equitable proportion.

Now I pass to the basis of one-fourteenth or one-fifteenth. This is not founded upon the total expenditure of the country; but upon what we are about to reckon as Imperial expenditure and the respective contribution to the Imperial Exchequer. The respective contribution *per capita* will be for Great Britain

£1, 10s. 11d., and for Ireland 13s. 5d., and I do not think that that is an inequitable arrangement. I wish to exhibit exactly what alterations we propose to make. Under the proportion now proposed, Ireland will pay 13s. 5d., while, if the present proportion were maintained, she would pay 16s. 10d., which will be a very considerable diminution in the amount of her contribution *per capita*.

I will state only one other striking fact with regard to the Irish expenditure. The House would like to know what an amount has been going on—and which at this moment is going on—of what I must call not only a waste of public money, but a demoralizing waste of public money, demoralizing in its influence upon both countries. The civil charges *per capita* at this moment are in Great Britain 8s. 2d. and in Ireland 16s. They have increased in Ireland in the last fifteen years by sixty-three per cent., and my belief is that if the present legislative and administrative systems be maintained you must make up your minds to a continued never-ending and never-to-be-limited augmentation. The amount of the Irish contribution upon the basis I have described would be as follows:—One-fifteenth of the annual debt charge of £22,000,000 would be £1,466,000, one-fifteenth of the Army and Navy charge, after excluding what we call war votes, and also excluding the charges for Volunteers and Yeomanry, would be £1,666,000, and the amount of the civil charges, which are properly considered Imperial, would entail upon Ireland £110,000, or a total charge properly Imperial of £3,242,000. I am now ready to present what I may call an Irish Budget, a debtor and creditor account for the Irish Exchequer. The customs produce in Ireland a gross sum of £1,880,000, the excise £4,300,000, the stamps £600,000, the income-tax, £550,000, and non-tax revenue, including the Post Office, £1,020,000. And, perhaps, here again I ought to mention as an instance of the demoralizing waste which now attends Irish administration, that which will perhaps surprise the House to know—namely, that while in England and Scotland we levy from the Post Office and Telegraph system a large surplus

income, in Ireland the Post Office and the Telegraphs just pay their expenses, or leave a surplus so small as not to be worth mentioning. I call that a very demoralizing way of spending money. Although I believe that there is no purer department in the country than the Post Office, yet the practical effect of our method of administering Ireland by influences known to be English and not Irish leads to a vast amount of unnecessary expenditure.

The total receipts of the Irish Exchequer are thus shown to amount to £8,350,000, and against that I have to place an imperial contribution which I may call permanent, because it will last for a great number of years, of £3,242,000. I put down £1,000,000 for the constabulary, because that would be a first charge, although I hope that it will soon come under very effective reduction. I put down £2,510,000 for the other civil charges in Ireland, and there again I have not the smallest doubt that that charge will likewise be very effectually reduced by an Irish Government. Finally, the collection of revenue is £834,000, making a total charge thus far of £7,586,000. Then we have thought it essential to include in this arrangement, not only for our own sakes, but for the sake of Ireland also, a payment on account of the Sinking Fund against the Irish portion of the National Debt. The Sinking Fund is now paid for the whole National Debt. We have now got to allot a certain portion of that debt to Ireland. We think it necessary to maintain that Sinking Fund, and especially for the interest of Ireland. When Ireland gets the management of her own affairs, I venture to prophesy that she will want, for useful purposes, to borrow money. But the difficulty of that operation will be enormously higher or lower according to the condition of her public credit. Her public credit is not yet born. It has yet to lie like an infant in the cradle, and it may require a good deal of nursing, but no nursing would be effectual unless it were plain and palpable to the eye of the whole world that Ireland had provision in actual working order for discharging her old obligations so as to make it safe for her to contract new obliga-

tions more nearly allied to her own immediate wants. I therefore put down three-quarters of a million for Sinking Fund. That makes the total charge £7,946,000, against a total income of £8,350,000, or a surplus of £404,000. But I can state to the House that that £404,000 is a part only of the Fund, which, under the present state of things, it would be the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the three countries to present to you for the discharge of our collective expenditure.

Sir, the House has heard me with astonishing patience while I have endeavoured to perform what I knew must prove an almost interminable task. There is only one subject more on which I feel it still necessary to detain the House. It is commonly said in England and Scotland—and in the main it is, I think, truly said—that we have for a great number of years been struggling to pass good laws for Ireland. We have sacrificed our time, we have neglected our own business, we have advanced our money, which I do not think at all a great favour conferred on her, and all this in the endeavour to give Ireland good laws. That is quite true in regard to the general course of legislation since 1829. But many of those laws have been passed under influences which can hardly be described otherwise than as influences of fear. Some of our laws have been passed in a spirit of grudging and of jealousy. It is most painful for me to consider that after four or five years' Parliamentary battle, when a Municipal Corporation Act¹ was passed for Ireland, it was a very different measure to that which in England and Scotland created complete and absolute municipal life. Were I to come to the history of the land question I could tell a still sadder tale. Let no man assume that he fully knows that history until he has followed it from year to year, beginning with the Devon Commission² or with the efforts of Mr Sharman Crawford.³ The appointment of the Devon Commission does, in my opinion, the highest honour to

¹ 1840.

² Appointed 1843.

³ Member for Rochdale, 1841-52, and founder of the Tenant Right Association.

the memory of Sir Robert Peel. Then notice the mode in which the whole labours of that Commission were frustrated by the domination of selfish interests in the British Parliament. Our first effort at land legislation was delayed until so late a period as the year 1870. I take this opportunity of remarking that sound views on the land question were not always confined to Irish members, nor to the Liberal side of this House. The late Mr Napier, who became Lord Chancellor of Ireland, when he sat¹ in this House for the academical constituency of Dublin, developed with great earnestness truly liberal views on the subject of Irish land, and made generous efforts in that direction—efforts which were, however, intercepted.

But, sir, I do not deny the general good intentions of Parliament on a variety of great and conspicuous occasions, and its desire to pass good laws for Ireland. But let me say that in order to work out the purposes of government there is something more in this world occasionally required than even the passing of good laws. It is sometimes requisite not only that good laws should be passed, but also that they should be passed by the proper persons. The passing of many good laws is not enough in cases where the strong permanent instincts of the people, their distinctive marks of character, the situation and history of the country, require not only that these laws should be good, but that they should proceed from a congenial and native source, and besides being good laws, should be their own laws. In former times it might have been doubted—I have myself doubted—whether this instinct had been thus developed in Ireland. If such doubts could be entertained before the last general election they can be entertained no longer.

The principle that I am laying down I am not laying down exceptionally for Ireland. It is the very principle upon which, within my recollection, to the immense advantage of the country, we have not only altered but revolutionised our method of

¹ 1848-58.

governing the Colonies. I had the honour to hold office in the Colonial Department—perhaps I ought to be ashamed to confess it—fifty-one years ago. At that time the Colonies were governed from Downing Street. It is true that some of them had legislative assemblies, but with these we were always in conflict. We were always fed with information by what was termed the British party in those Colonies. A clique of gentlemen constituted themselves the British party; and the non-British party, which was sometimes called the “disloyal party,” was composed of the enormous majority of the population. We had continual shocks, continual debates, and continual conflicts. All that has changed. England tried to pass good laws for the Colonies at that period, but the Colonies said, “We do not want your good laws; we want our own.” We admitted the reasonableness of that principle, and it is now coming home to us from across the seas. We have to consider whether it is applicable to the case of Ireland. Do not let us disguise this from ourselves. We stand face to face with what is termed Irish nationality. Irish nationality vents itself in the demand for local autonomy or separate and complete self-government in Irish, not in Imperial affairs. Is this an evil in itself? Is it a thing that we should view with horror or apprehension? Is it a thing which we ought to reject or accept only with a wry face, or ought we to wait until some painful and sad necessity is incumbent upon the country, like the necessity of 1780 or the necessity of 1793? Sir, I hold that it is not. There is a saying of Mr Grattan—who was indeed a fiery and fervid orator, but he was more than that, he was a statesman, his aphorisms are in my opinion weighty, and even profound, and I commend them to the careful reflection and examination of the country—when he was deprecating the surrender of the Irish Parliament, and pointing out that its existence did not prevent the perfect union of the two countries, he remarked, “The Channel forbids union, the ocean forbids separation.” Is that channel nothing? Do what you will with your steamers and your telegraphs, can you make that channel cease to exist, or to be as if it were not? These

sixty miles may appear a little thing, but I ask you what are the twenty miles between England and France? These few miles of water have exercised a vital influence upon the whole history, the whole development, and the whole national character of our people.

These, sir, are great facts. I hold that there is such a thing as local patriotism, which in itself is not bad, but good. The Welshman is full of local patriotism—the Scotchman is full of local patriotism; the Scotch nationality is as strong as it ever was, and should the occasion arise—which I believe it never can—it will be as ready to assert itself as in the days of Bannockburn. I do not believe that that local patriotism is an evil. I believe it is stronger in Ireland even than in Scotland. Englishmen are eminently English, Scotchmen are profoundly Scotch, and, if I read Irish history aright, misfortune and calamity have wedded her sons to her soil. The Irishman is more profoundly Irish, but it does not follow that because his local patriotism is keen he is incapable of Imperial patriotism. There are two modes of presenting the subject. The one is to present what we now recommend as good, and the other to recommend it as a choice of evils. Well, sir, I have argued the matter as if it were a choice of evils; I have recognised as facts entitled to attention the jealousies which I do not share or feel, and I have argued it on that ground as the only ground on which it can be argued, not only in a mixed auditory, but in the public mind and to the country, which cannot give a minute investigation to the operations of that complicated question. But in my own heart I cherish the hope that this is not merely the choice of the lesser evil, but may prove to be rather a good in itself. What is the answer to this? It is only to be found in the view which rests upon the basis of despair and of absolute condemnation of Ireland and Irishmen as exceptions to the beneficent provisions which enable men in general, and Europeans in particular, and Americans, to be capable of performing civil duties, and which considers an Irishman either as a *lusus nature* or one for whom justice,

common-sense, moderation, and national prosperity have no meaning, and who can only understand and appreciate perpetual strife and dissension. Well, sir, I am not going to argue that view, which to my mind is founded on a monstrous misconception. I say that the Irishman is as capable of loyalty as another man—I say that if his loyalty has been checked in its development, why is it? Because the laws by which he is governed do not present themselves to him, as they do to us in England and Scotland, with a native and congenial aspect, and I think I can refer to two illustrations which go strongly to support the doctrine I have advanced. Take the case of the Irish soldier, and of the Irish constabulary. Have you a braver or a more loyal man in your army than the Irishman, who has shared every danger with his Scotch and English comrades, and who has never been behind them when confronted by peril, for the sake of the honour and safety of his Empire? Compare this case with that of an ordinary Irishman in Ireland. The Irish soldier has voluntarily placed himself under military law, which is to him a self-chosen law, and he is exempted from that difficulty which works upon the population in Ireland—namely, that they are governed by a law which they do not feel has sprung from the soil. Consider how common it is to hear the observation, in discussing the circumstances of Ireland, that while the constabulary are largely taken from the Roman Catholic population and from the very class most open to disaffection, where disaffection exists, they form a splendid model of obedience, discipline, and devotion such as the world can hardly match. How is this? It is because they have undertaken a voluntary service which takes them completely out of the category of the ordinary Irishman. They are placed under an authority which is to them congenial because freely accepted. Their loyalty is not checked by the causes that operate on the agricultural population of Ireland. It has grown as freely in the constabulary and in the Army as if every man in the constabulary and every Irish soldier had been an Englishman or a Scotchman.

However this may be, we are sensible that we have taken an important decision—our choice has been made. It has not been made without thought; it has been made in the full knowledge that trial and difficulty may confront us on our path. We have no right to say that Ireland through her constitutionally-chosen representatives will accept the plan I offer. Whether it will be so I do not know—I have no title to assume it—but if Ireland does not cheerfully accept it, it is impossible for us to attempt to force upon her what is intended to be a boon; nor can we possibly press England and Scotland to accord to Ireland what she does not heartily welcome and embrace. There are difficulties, but I rely upon the patriotism and sagacity of this House; I rely on the effects of free and full discussion; and I rely more than all upon the just and generous sentiments of the two British nations. Looking forward, I ask the House to assist us in the work which we have undertaken, and to believe that no trivial motive can have driven us to it—to assist us in this work which we believe will restore Parliament to its dignity, and legislation to its free and unimpeded course. I ask you to stay that waste of public treasure which is involved in the present system of government and legislation in Ireland; and which is not a waste only, but which demoralizes while it exhausts. I ask you to show to Europe and to America that we too can face political problems which America twenty years ago faced, and which many countries in Europe have been called upon to face, and have not feared to deal with. I ask that in our own case we should practise with firm and fearless hand what we have so often preached—the doctrine which we have so often inculcated upon others—namely, that the concession of local self-government is not the way to sap or impair, but the way to strengthen and consolidate, unity. I ask that we should learn to rely less upon merely written stipulations, and more upon those better stipulations which are written on the heart and mind of man. I ask that we should apply to Ireland that happy experience which we have gained in England and in Scotland, where the course of generations has now taught us

not as a dream or a theory but as practice and as life, that the best and surest foundation we can find to build upon is the foundation afforded by the affections, the convictions, and the will of the nation ; and it is thus, by the decree of the Almighty, that we may be enabled to secure at once the social peace, the fame, the power, and the permanence of the Empire.

HOME RULE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 13, 1886.

The Government of Ireland Bill, generally known as the "Home Rule" Bill, passed its first reading, on April 13th, without a division, after four nights' debate.

* I WILL make at the outset one or two very brief remarks upon the speech of the right hon. gentleman.¹ He has quoted words from me with an extension given to them that they do not carry in the original document. The argument which I made upon the proposal² of 1871 was this—that no case had at that time been made to justify any radical change in any of the institutions of the country generally, or any interference with the constitution of the Imperial Parliament, and I own that at that time, after the Church Act of 1869 and after the Land Act of 1870, I did cherish the hope that we might be able, by legislation from this House, to meet the wants and the wishes of Ireland. I cherished that hope at that time; but at that time, if the right hon. gentleman has done me the justice to make himself completely acquainted with my sentiments expressed in that speech, he will find that it contains none of the apprehensions with which the minds of hon. members opposite are filled, and that, on the contrary, I then stated in the most explicit manner that I had heard with joy, and I accepted with the utmost satisfaction, the assurance that the demand which was beginning to be made by Mr Butt for Home Rule did not involve in any way

¹ Sir Michael Hicks-Beach.

² The Home Government Association, afterwards the Home Rule League, was founded in 1870. In 1871 Mr Isaac Butt, Member for the City of Limerick, was elected leader of the Irish party. He is said to have invented the phrase "Home Rule."

the disintegration of the Empire. But I certainly will not enter into a discussion on the Transvaal Convention,¹ with regard to which I may make the observation that I think that the topics we have to deal with relevant to the matter are sufficient, and I do not consider that any observation from me is wanted on an act which I believe has been recognised by this country as a great act of justice, and as the undoing—perhaps that is the more accurate description of it—of the great act of injustice which stains the memory of our legislation on this subject.

The right hon. gentleman says that I have shown mistrust of the Irish Legislature by providing safeguards for minorities. I have already stated in the most distinct terms that the safeguards provided, so far as I am concerned, are not in consequence of mistrust entertained by me, but they are in consequence of mistrust entertained by others. They are reasonable precautions by way of contribution on our part to disarm honest though unfounded jealousy; and however little it may appear that they are likely to attain their end, yet I cannot regret that we have made them. One more observation with respect to the foreign garb of English laws. The right hon. gentleman must understand that I have used those words not with respect to the beneficial Acts which have been passed on many occasions by this Parliament for the purpose of meeting the wants of Ireland, but with regard to the ordinary operations of the criminal law in that country, especially in association, as it has constantly been, with the provisions of special repressive or coercive legislation.

Lastly, I must express the astonishment with which I heard the right hon. gentleman refer to the Roman Catholic Association.² He spoke of the disappearance of that association from the scene as a great triumph obtained by the vigour and firmness of the Government and the Parliament over unruly elements in Ireland. Why, sir, on the contrary, the disappearance of the Roman Catholic Association was due entirely

¹ 1881.

² Formed in 1823.

to the introduction of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill,¹ as unhappily the introduction of that Relief Bill was due, as the Duke of Wellington himself declared, to his apprehension of civil war, and as the alternative to it. The right hon. gentleman could not have afforded a more unhappy instance of that which has been a too common feature of the relations of this House to Ireland, and of those combinations the recurrence of which we are striving to avoid. I was told by my noble friend the Member for the Rossendale Division² that I had not a formulated demand from Ireland. No, sir; but the Duke of Wellington had a pretty well formulated demand; and we now know—and I am glad that the observations of the right hon. gentleman gave the Irish Members below the gangway an opportunity of bearing testimony—we now know in substance what is demanded by Ireland through her constitutionally chosen representatives; and therefore I say, if it be a just and reasonable demand, we cannot hasten too soon to meet it; and we will not wait until the day of disaster, the day of difficulty, and I will add the day of dishonour, to yield, as we have so often yielded, to necessity that which we were unwilling to yield to justice.

Sir, I desire to avoid details in this stage of the debate and at this hour of the night, and I will endeavour to make this sacrifice at any rate, that I will neither defend myself nor censure anybody else; but I will deal as far as I can with some of the arguments that have recently been laid before us.

One detail I must notice which has been largely introduced into this debate, and in so striking a manner by many members of the House—it is that which relates to the presence of Irish members, or the cessation of that presence, at Westminster. When I spoke on Thursday last³ I laid down—and now I am going to answer an appeal of the right hon. gentleman who asked me what were the essential conditions of this Bill—I laid down, I say, five essential conditions, from which it appeared to me we could under no circumstances depart, and under which the grant

¹ In 1829.

² Lord Hartington, now Duke of Devonshire.

³ See the preceding speech.

of a domestic Legislature to Ireland would be justifiable and wise. These were the essential conditions under which, in our opinion, the granting of a domestic Legislature to Ireland would be justifiable and wise—first, that it must be consistent with Imperial unity; secondly, that it must be founded upon the political equality of the three nations; thirdly, that there must be an equitable distribution of Imperial burdens; fourthly, that there should be safeguards for the minority; and fifthly, that it should be in the nature of a settlement, and not of a mere provocation for the revival of fresh demands. I stated that these were the only conditions.

I find I have been reported as having stated that the retention of customs and excise by this country, and the absence of Irish members from this House, were likewise vital and essential conditions. I do not think I used those epithets. If I did, it was probably an inadvertence, for which I apologise, and unquestionably it was in entire contradiction to what I had just stated before, when I laid down the only essential conditions. Sir, what I think with regard to the Irish members—although the question is much too large for me to attempt to enter fully into it at present—what I thought clear with regard to the Irish members was, in the first place, this—that the 103 Irish members could not possibly continue as now to come here and vote upon all matters—English, Scotch, Irish, and Imperial alike. That I conceived to be wholly indisputable. I stated that I had hoped—that I had long tried to find—some practicable means of distinction between Imperial and British matters, and that my efforts had entirely failed, nor could I see any way to such a distinction. I also stated that in my opinion it was impossible for England, and that no doubt England would never desire or dream of inflicting or forcing upon Ireland taxation without representation; that if Irish members were to disappear either permanently or for a time—I do not say I used these epithets—were to disappear from this House, it must be by the consent of Ireland herself.

Since that time a variety of suggestions have been made in many speeches, which have shown how much interest is felt in

this question. *It has been suggested that Irish members might come here with limited powers. But I have certainly failed to discover means of drawing the line. It has been stated that they might come in limited numbers, and it has been suggested in a wise and weighty speech delivered by my hon. friend the Member for Bedford*¹ last night, that an interval of absence from this House was eminently desirable, and perhaps almost of vital necessity for Ireland herself with a view to her own purposes. Then, says my hon. friend, if I understood him right, after such an interval of years has passed, during which, God knows, there will be enough to do for any Parliament—any representative body that Ireland can be supplied with—after such an interval, if it is desired that Irish members in any number or any proportion, or under any conditions should reappear in this House, that is a problem which, however difficult, British statesmanship may be found adequate to solve. There was great force in what my hon. friend said. I cannot, however, bind myself with regard to these observations or to any of the propositions which I have just cited. I cannot bind myself, still less any of my colleagues, but I think, bearing in mind the importance of the subject, and the vast and immeasurable importance of the purposes we have in view, I do not think we should be right—it would be even presumptuous—were we to take upon ourselves, in the face of the House, at this early stage of the discussion on the Bill, entirely to close the doors against any consideration of this kind.

The position, therefore, remains exactly as it was; but I have thought that that reference which I have made to the speech of my hon. friend is no more than that, and other portions of that speech, eminently deserve.

Now, sir, my right hon. friend the Member for East Edinburgh² has addressed the House very fully to-night, and has raised a great number of questions connected with this Bill. My right hon. friend is terribly alarmed at the argument drawn from the presence of 86 Nationalist members, 85 of them

¹ Mr Whitbread.

² Mr Goschen.

from Ireland, in this Parliament. He is perfectly alarmed at this argument. I do not know whether he did me the honour to refer to my view of it. If he did, he is entirely mistaken. He treated it as if a statement had been made by me to the effect that because there are 85 Nationalist members in this House, you must do whatever they demand; and, treating it in that way and having created this phantom, it is easy enough to show that it is a most formidable proposition. He spent a long time in showing the most portentous consequences to which it would lead. Yes, sir, but that is not the argument so far as I used it; it was not the argument so far as I have heard it. What I ventured to say was this—that the deliberate and constitutional expression of the wishes of Ireland through the vast majority of her members entails upon this House the duty and the obligation of a respectful and a favourable consideration of every wish that Ireland may entertain consistently with the interests and the integrity of the Empire. My right hon. friend said there was a parity in principle between Ireland and Scotland. I entirely agree with him. His experience as a Scotch member is short. If the vast majority of Scotchmen demand something on the ground that Scotch feeling and opinion show that it is essentially required in order to satisfy the just wishes of Scotland, I would advise my right hon. friend, if he wishes to be consistent with regard to the integrity of the Empire, not to put himself in conflict with those expressions of opinion.

Then, sir, my right hon. friend said that no analogy could be drawn—and so said my noble friend the Member for Rossendale—from the proceedings of the Protestant Parliament of Grattan. What was the meaning of all this? I have been arguing and others have argued that Grattan's Parliament showed no tendency and no disposition towards a separation of the kingdoms, and that Grattan himself looked upon the separation of the Parliaments as a means of uniting the hearts of the people. That has been met by the statement now that that was a Protestant Parliament and a landlords' Parliament. Sir, if that is the way to make a Parliament safe and sound, if to re-intro-

duce religious disabilities, if to narrow the franchise, if to centre power in the hands of the landlords, or if you are to go further and fill more than half the benches of Parliament with pensioners and placemen, then, if these are the elements of safety in a Parliament, in what gross and woeful error have we been in this Parliament for half a century. We have been breaking down the exclusive power of class; we have been widening the franchise over the whole kingdom and effacing from the statute-book one by one—until the very last perhaps is contained in this Bill¹—every vestige of religious disability. There is no faith in the people with those who make these declarations. Their faith seems to be in shutting out the people, and in regarding popular influence as a source of danger. In this happy country we have found it a source of strength; and the enterprise we are now engaged in is to see whether we cannot also find security for it in Ireland that it shall be to her a similar source of strength under circumstances happier than those of her history heretofore.

My right hon. friend seems to sum up the misdeeds of the Irish people in an emphatic question—"In what country except Ireland would a No-Rent Manifesto² have been produced?" That is the inquiry which he puts. My first observation upon it is this—in what country except Ireland can you show so lamentable, so deplorable a history—a history so disgraceful to those who had any hand in bringing it about—and relations so deplorable between those who owned the land and those who occupied it? The speech of my right hon. friend appeared to proceed upon the assumption that there were ineradicable and incurable vices in Irishmen which placed them in a category different from the people of other nations—that they had a sort of double dose of original sin. Is it to be wondered at that the notions of Irishmen should to some extent be gone awry upon the subject of land and the relations connected with it when you bear in mind that the Devon Commission, appointed by a Tory Government,³ reported that the agricultural population of Ireland were

¹ See preceding speech, p. 35.

² October 1881.

³ In 1843. "They produced, at the commencement of 1845, a report

called upon to bear, and that they did bear, with admirable and exemplary patience, sufferings greater than those which fell to the lot of any other people in Europe? Are you so ignorant as to suppose, when these sufferings had been borne for generations, I may say for centuries, as disclosed to the world on the highest authority, and when attempt after attempt to apply something like a remedy to the miseries that existed from the operation of the land laws in Ireland had failed through the narrow jealousy and selfishness of a class—that these things could pass without leaving a mark in history? Does my right hon. friend think that these things can pass and set their mark upon history, and yet leave no mark in the nature and disposition and habits of men who have been sufferers under such abominations?

My right hon. friend thinks my analogy with foreign countries is bad; that Austria and Hungary, Norway and Sweden, have nothing to do with these things. But my statement has been entirely misapprehended. I will recall the terms of it for the benefit of the right hon. gentleman. I never said that the analogy was exact, that the circumstances were exactly parallel. What I said was that the circumstances were such as would show that we are called upon in this country to do, with infinitely greater advantages, what they have done in the face of infinitely greater difficulties. My right hon. friend appears to think it a difficulty in our way that we have got an Imperial Parliament and a greater number of subordinate local Parliaments related to the British Empire. My point is that there is not in Sweden a supremacy of the Swedish Parliament over Norway; that there is not in Austria a supremacy of the Austrian Parliament over Hungary, and that, even without the advantage of such supremacy, the problem has in those countries been solved in substance, and that, in the case of Norway and Sweden particularly, by the adoption of the simple expedient of granting a domestic Legislature and practical local independence, the union of the two countries, which at one time seemed hopeless and impossible, has become close, and is growing

which ought to be familiar to every one who desires to understand the Irish question."—Spencer Walpole, "History of England," C. xix.

closer from day to day. Then how is it that these illustrations have no bearing upon the great problem that we have before us ?

Again, my right hon. friend states as a difficulty that our interests are so interlaced with Ireland. I am astonished to hear that observation called upon to pass muster and do duty among the arguments against this Bill. Why, if our interests are so interlaced—and I thank God it is true that they are so interlaced—is not that in itself a strong presumption of the extreme unlikelihood that Irishmen will overlook that interlacing and proceed as if we were perfectly independent, as if they had nothing to do with us, no benefit to derive from us, and no injury to suffer from injury to us ? No ! the truth is this. It is assumed—and this is the basis of the speech of my right hon. friend—that the Irishman will do wrong, and that there is no way of making him listen to the dictates of prudence, of kindness, of justice, of good sense, except by taking into your own hands the reins by which you can govern him and teaching him how he shall walk. On that principle it is that my right hon. friend went over all the different classes of subjects, and described the dreadful changes that everything was to undergo : legislation was to be changed, administration was to be changed, the Civil Service was to be changed, the face of nature itself was to be changed. Such is the terrible picture. And why ? Is there no common-sense among that portion of our fellow-countrymen ?

The speech of my right hon. friend recalled to my memory a striking sentence of Lord Russell's fifty years ago, which implanted itself deeply on my memory at the time, and which I have never forgotten, and I hope never shall forget. It was at the time¹ when, under the administration of the Melbourne Government, Mr Thomas Drummond was Under-Secretary for Ireland, and when with singular success he was endeavouring to conduct the Irish Administration, so far as he could, in sympathy with the feelings of the people. His misdeeds, as I suppose I must call them, found their climax in the utterance

¹ 1835-1840.

of the portentous doctrine which shocked Conservatism from Land's End to John O'Groats—he had the audacity to say that “property had its duties as well as its rights.” The corresponding misdeeds of Mr Drummond, and in some sense of the Lord Lieutenant, caused many debates in this House, in which I am thankful to say I took no part, but to which I was an attentive listener. Every sort of objection and accusation was brought forward against the proceedings of the Irish Government of that day; and Lord Russell, in his quiet way, rising to take part in a debate, said:—“It appears to me that all these objections, all these difficulties, and all these accusations”—I may not be quoting every word accurately, but I am very near the mark—“may be summed up in one single sentence. It comes, sir, to this—that as England is inhabited by Englishmen, and Scotland by Scotchmen, so Ireland is inhabited by Irishmen.” Lord Russell knew very well that Irishmen did not come here to conquer us 700 years ago, but that we went to Ireland to conquer—we favoured Irishmen with our company, we have been all along the stronger party of the two, and it is one of the uniform and unfailing rules that guide human judgment, if not of the moment yet of history, that when a long relation has existed between a nation of superior strength and one of inferior strength, and when that relation has gone wrong, the responsibility and the guilt rests in the main upon the strong rather than upon the weak.

My right hon. friend asked me questions as to the provisions of this Bill, and I must confess my surprise at some of them, coming as they do from one who is an old official hand. They were questions most proper to be asked—perhaps on the second reading of a Bill—certainly in Committee, but I have never heard of such questions upon the motion for leave to introduce a Bill. If questions of that kind are to be asked, why, sir, this House ought to alter its rules and give an hon. member applying for leave to introduce a Bill the power of laying it upon the table of the House before it is read a first time. For example, my right hon. friend asked a question about the veto. Well, sir, we have stated with regard to that point that there is no

limitation to the veto in the Bill, and, if the right hon. gentleman asks my opinion, my opinion is that the principle upon which the veto is now worked—if the right hon. gentleman will take the trouble to read the valuable work¹ of Professor Dicey, to which I have before referred, he will find a most careful and interesting elucidation of the subject—the principle upon which the veto is now worked in the great Colonial dependencies of this country,—though I do not admit that Ireland will be reduced to the *status* of a colony,—I believe that principle to be applicable for all practical purposes to Ireland with a domestic Legislature.

Then my right hon. friend asked a question about the levying of the Income-tax. He did not seem to have even a very elementary idea of what the Irish income-tax would be, and he asked where the dividends would be payable, whether the dividends would be payable in London or in Dublin. Why, sir, no such questions can possibly arise under this Bill as the Bill stands. The Irish income-tax will be just as distinct from the income-tax of England and Scotland as if it were a French income-tax. Well, I will give you another illustration, as if it were an Indian income-tax. From time to time they have in India the blessing of an income-tax; but in India the whole machinery, the incidence of the tax, the liability to pay it, are all as totally distinct from the tax in this country as if the income-tax there were laid in another planet.

My right hon. friend finally laid very much stress on the case of the United States of America. He pointed out that insidious advisers recommended the Northern States not to insist upon the maintenance of the Union, but that they did insist on the maintenance of the Union and carried their point. Why, true, sir; but having carried their point, what did they do? Having the Southern States at their feet, being in a position in which they were entitled to treat them as conquered countries, they invested every one of them with that full autonomy, a measure of which we are now asking for Ireland. I say a measure of which autonomy, because I believe that their autonomy

¹ "The Law of the Constitution."

is much fuller than that for which we are now asking for Ireland.

Well, sir, I may say some words more. My right hon. friend said—I am not quite sure whether my right hon. friend said so, but certainly my noble friend, the Member for Rossendale did—that these enactments if carried would lead to further demands from Ireland. That is a favourite objection. The right hon. gentleman¹ who has just sat down has been extremely cautious in this matter, and he has promised Ireland—I hope I am not misrepresenting him—almost nothing except a reasonable allowance of repressive criminal legislation. The phantom of local government and a little control over education and public works, and such things, find no place whatever in the speech of the leader of the Opposition, but they find a place in the speech of my right hon. friend behind me, and of my noble friend the Member for Rossendale. Well, sir, we are going to give to the Irish people—if we are permitted—that which we believe to be in substantial accordance with their full, possible, and reasonable demands. In our opinion, that is the way to stop further demands.

I should like to quote Mr Burke—and I hope we shall hear much of Mr Burke in the course of this discussion—for the writings of Mr Burke upon Ireland, and still more upon America, are a mine of gold for the political wisdom with which they are charged, applicable to the circumstances of to-day, full of the deepest and most valuable lessons to guide the policy of a country. He was speaking for conciliation with America, and those to whom he was preaching in vain met him with this idle cavil that his conciliation would tend to further demands. They refused this conciliation, but further demands came, and they were granted—with hands dyed in blood, and after hundreds of millions had been added to our National Debt, and when disparagement, at the very least, of England's fame went through the length and breadth of the world in connection with that wretched consummation—were granted, leaving behind them in America an inheritance,

¹ Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Leader of the Opposition.

not of goodwill or affection such as now prevails, but of rancour and resentment which for generations were not effaced, and which were the happy consequences of a courageous resistance. I am not afraid, sir, of the same consequences in the same form. There is no question of war with Ireland, but it is a question of what I care for more than anything else—the character, the honour, and the fair fame of my country; it is a question of humanity, of justice, and of a desire to make atonement for a long—a too long—series of former, and not yet wholly forgotten, wrongs. Now, sir, what did Mr Burke say on that occasion when he was advocating conciliation with America? He said that the more and the better state of liberty any people possessed, the less would they hazard in the vain attempt to make it more.

What are the proposals of my noble friend? They are: First a little dose of coercion, and next a grudging gift to Ireland of such self-government as England and Scotland may be pleased to choose for themselves. Now I deny the justice of the principle that self-government in Ireland is necessarily to be limited by the wishes of England and Scotland for themselves. Upon what basis of justice does that argument rest? Why may not Ireland have specialities in her case which England and Scotland may not have? We have no right to say that what England wants and Scotland wants Ireland may have, but nothing else. You must show that what Ireland wants is mischievous before you are justified in refusing her. I am speaking now of the favourite topic of "further demands." Was there ever a device more certain to prolong all the troubles of Parliament? was there ever a system of policy less hopeful of attaining any solid standing-ground than this proposal to dole out to Ireland from year to year with grudging and misgiving, and with a frank statement that it is a dangerous business, that which she does not want, and which, if she accepts at all, she will only accept for the purpose of making further demands? It was denied in very clear language by the Irish representatives that they sought to press forward from this measure to other measures. They

claim, and very fairly and reasonably claim—because no member of Parliament could divest himself of the right—to examine in Committee the provisions of the Bill, and to demand this or that amendment. But they have expressly disclaimed the intention to make what my noble friend calls further demands. Let him put to them the same question, and ask them for the same assurances, as to the proposals made in this debate by a most distinguished person¹—one who, unfortunately, I know only three years ago declared that there should be no extension of local government until the Irish members made a total change in their methods of speech and action. No doubt measures doled out in the shape of municipal corporations here and there would be certain to be used for the purpose of making further demands. I commend the consistency and caution of the right hon. gentleman, the leader of the Opposition, because he fairly told us at the commencement of the session,² when he was asked what boons would be given to Ireland in the way of local government, that no enlargement of the powers of local government should be given which might be used as a lever to weaken and destroy the legislative Union, or (as he went on to say) enable the political majority to tyrannize over the minority. A very sensible, a very consistent course. If you grant some small modicum of local government, it would simply be a device for securing perpetual disturbance of this Parliament from year to year by Irish members, and they would strengthen the leverage with which they would use those demands and advance them to their natural consummation.

My noble friend complains that this was a question which had not been referred to the people. I should like to know what is the upshot of that observation. What does it mean? I think it can hardly mean anything else than this—that the Government had committed a fault in bringing forward this question at the present time because it had not brought the matter under public consideration at the General Election. It

¹ Sir M. Hicks-Beach.

² January 21st.

seems to me that that is an extraordinary doctrine. I want to know where it is to be found laid down by any Constitutional authority. My hon. friend the Attorney-General¹ asked whether there was any mandate for coercion. No, sir, there was no mandate for coercion, and you cannot want a mandate for any measures necessary to maintain the law. Very well, sir; but if you do not want a mandate for the measures of force and repression, intended to maintain the law, much less do you want a mandate for measures intended to maintain and strengthen the law by laying hold of the hearts of the people, and which aim at no force and no repression, but at an union far closer and more durable than that which now exists on the Statute Book.

I do not know whether my noble friend has given much attention to the case of the Reform Act, but it is a rather curious one from this point of view. The election of 1830 was conducted almost entirely without reference to the subject of reform. At that time the election extended over very many weeks, and it was only just before it had quite finished—and the Yorkshire election, if I recollect rightly, was about the last—that those great events occurred in Paris which produced a sympathetic effect here and roused a cry for reform in England, but in the main the Parliament was elected without the least reference to reform. Yes, sir; but when that Parliament met, and when it was found that the wants of the country required reform, although it was denounced as revolution—and I can assure hon. gentlemen opposite that all their invectives are weak and ineffective in comparison—Parliament set about its work manfully; the Government proposed to Parliament, and Parliament entertained, the great proposal then laid before it. It would be a very different thing, indeed, if my colleagues who have spoken in the debate had evaded the real issue, or had declared that the question was unfit to come before us. I never uttered an opinion, nor shall I utter an opinion, that it is a subject unfit to come before the people; I think we who propose this Bill should be the last persons who should be jealous of any reference to the people.

¹ Sir Charles Russell.

Coming now to the proposals of my right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham,¹ in the first place, let me say that I at once accord to him—what, however, he cannot want according from me—that is, his perfect and entire good faith in the representations that he made, upon which a misapprehension prevailed between us, as to his title to enter upon certain matters. If anything further is required upon that point, it certainly can keep until Friday next, when the Bill on the land question is brought forward. Quite irrespective of the land law, my right hon. friend stated four points, any one of which was an ample justification of the step which he felt himself called upon to take. But he, at any rate, gave no countenance to coercive legislation. He looks into the future, and he sees how light and trivial is the talk about coercive legislation. But my right hon. friend went a great deal further, and suggested a Commission or Committee, to be formed of all parties, to deal with this subject. I will not criticise that proposal. I venture the opinion that no solution of the question will ever proceed from a Royal Commission or a Committee composed of all parties, much less pass through Parliament. Then my right hon. friend spoke of federation. If you are to have federation there must be somebody to federate, and there will be nobody, except a legislative body is entitled to act for the people. It appears to me that my right hon. friend goes further than we do, because he is in favour of not only giving a domestic Legislature, but of appending to it that rather formidable postscript of some arrangement under which this Parliament is to part with some of its powers and throw them into the common stock along with powers coming from other portions of the Empire. I cannot, therefore, say that he has remained behind us in this matter.

What is really material to observe is the mutual relations of harmony and concord subsisting between the plans of those who think they ought to sink differences and unite together for the purpose of finding a solution for the Irish problem. The Chan-

¹ Mr J. Chamberlain.

cellor of the Exchequer,¹ in his masterly statement, exhibited in full detail the relations actually subsisting among those most distinguished gentlemen and great Parliamentary authorities. He has shown that the Border Burghs does not agree with Birmingham, and that Birmingham does not agree with Rossendale, and that Rossendale does not agree with Paddington, and, again, Edinburgh is distinct in shade from them all. There is a decided want of common feature, common action, common purpose, common principle; there is no united basis of action except the basis of hostility to this Bill.

When I speak of this plan, I speak of it as a plan in its essence and not in its detail. It may derive much advantage from the wisdom of Parliament. It has been produced and brought to light under a degree of pressure such as I believe never was applied by circumstances to any Government, such at least, I will venture to say, as there is no case of in the half-century to which my recollection extends. It may be improved by the wisdom of this House, but speaking of it as a plan, I say it holds the field. It has many enemies; it has not a single rival. No one has been bold enough to propose an intelligible system of what, in my opening statement, I called effectual coercion—the only kind of coercion that can be adequate to the end you have in view. And, sir, as the plan holds the field, the subject holds the field. Never, I think, have I witnessed such signs of public absorption in this House and out of this House. And, sir, it is safe to prophesy that the subject will continue to hold the field. Many who are here advocate important reforms; many think, and I am one of them, that legislation is in arrear. The demands upon your time and thought are beyond your capacity, even with your best exertions, to meet. But, sir, you may dismiss all these subjects from your mind until this matter is disposed of, until the Irish problem is solved. I am not speaking of what gentlemen opposite may threaten or say; I am looking at the nature of the case; I am looking at the profound interest of the whole English and Scotch people, aye, and

¹ Sir William Harcourt, who spoke earlier in the evening.

of the whole civilised world. Until this problem is solved it is idle to think of making real progress with the business of this country, in respect to the important subjects which are perfectly ripe for the handling of Parliament. We have come to the time for decisive action; we have come to the time for throwing aside not only private interests and partial affections, but private devices and partial remedies. We have come to the time for looking at the whole breadth of this subject and endeavouring to compass it in our minds. We have come to the time when we must answer this question—whether we will make one bold attempt to free Parliament for its great and necessary work, and to establish harmony by Irish laws for Ireland, or whether we will continue, on the other hand, to struggle on as we have done before, living from hand to mouth, leaving England and Scotland to a famine of needful and useful legislation, and Ireland to a continuance of social disease, the depth of which we have never understated, of social disease that you do not know how to deal with, and of angry discord with Great Britain, which you make no attempt to cure.

HOME RULE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 10, 1886.

Mr Gladstone moved the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill. On April 16th he had introduced the Sale and Purchase of Land (Ireland) Bill.

SIR,—I was the latest of the members of this House who had an opportunity of addressing the House in the debate on the introduction of this Bill; yet I think no one will be surprised at my desiring to submit some observations in moving the second reading. And this on the double ground:—First of all, because unquestionably the discussion has been carried on since the introduction of the Bill throughout the country with remarkable liveliness and activity; and, secondly, because so many criticisms have turned on an important particular of the Bill with respect to which the Government feel it to be an absolute duty on our part that we should, without any delay whatever, render to the House the advantage of such explanations as, consistently with our public duty, it may be in our power to make.

I am very sorry to say that I am obliged to introduce into this speech—but only I hope to the extent of a very few sentences—a statement of my own personal position in regard to this question, which I refrained from mentioning to the House at the time when I asked for leave to bring in the Bill. But I read speeches which some gentlemen opposite apparently think it important to make to their constituencies, and which contain statements so entirely erroneous and baseless that, although I do not think it myself to be a subject of great importance and relevancy to the question, yet as they do think it to be so, I am bound to set them right, and to provide them

with the means of avoiding similar errors on future occasions. Although it is not a very safe thing for a man who has been for a long time in public life—and sometimes not very safe even for those who have been for a short time in public life—to assert a negative, still I will venture to assert that I have never in any period of my life declared what is now familiarly known as Home Rule in Ireland to be incompatible with Imperial unity. [“Oh, oh!”] Yes; exactly so. My sight is bad, and I am not going to make personal references; but I dare say the interruption comes from some member who has been down to his constituents and has made one of those speeches stuffed full of totally untrue and worthless matter.

I will go on to say what is true in this matter. In 1871 the question of Home Rule was an extremely young question. In fact, Irish history on these matters in my time has divided itself into three great periods. The first was the Repeal period under Mr O'Connell, which began about the time of the Reform Act and lasted until the death of that distinguished man. On that period I am not aware of ever having given an opinion; but that is not the question which I consider is now before us. The second period was that between the death of Mr O'Connell and the emergence, so to say, of the subject of Home Rule. That was the period in which physical force and organisations with that object were conceived and matured, taking effect under the name generally of what is known as Fenianism. In 1870 or 1871 came up the question of Home Rule. In a speech which I made in Aberdeen¹ at that period I stated the great satisfaction with which I heard and with which I accepted the statements of the proposers of Home Rule, that under that name they contemplated nothing that was at variance with the unity of the Empire.

But while I say this, do not let it be supposed that I have ever regarded the introduction of Home Rule as a small matter, or as entailing a slight responsibility. I admit, on the contrary, that I have regarded it as a subject of the gravest responsibility, and so I still regard it. I have cherished, as long as I was able

¹ September 26th, 1871.

to cherish, the hope that Parliament might, by passing—by the steady and the continuous passing of—good measures for Ireland, be able to encounter and dispose of the demand for Home Rule in that manner which obviously can alone be satisfactory. In that hope undoubtedly I was disappointed. I found that we could not reach that desired point. But two conditions have been always absolute and indispensable with me in regard to Home Rule. In the first place, it was absolutely necessary that it should be shown, by marks at once unequivocal and perfectly constitutional, to be the desire of the great mass of the population of Ireland; and I do not hesitate to say that that condition has never been absolutely and unequivocally fulfilled, in a manner to make its fulfilment undeniable, until the occasion of the recent election.¹ It was open for any one to discuss whether the hon. Member for Cork²—acting as he acted in the last Parliament, with some forty-five members—it was open to any one to question how far he spoke the sentiments of the mass of the Irish population. At any rate, it is quite evident that any responsible man in this country, taking up the question of Home Rule at that time, and urging the belief that it was the desire of the mass of the Irish population, would have been encountered in every quarter of the House with an incredulity that it would have been totally impossible for him to overcome. Well, I own that to me that question is a settled question. I live in a country of representative institutions; I have faith in representative institutions; and I will follow them out to their legitimate consequences; and I believe it to be dangerous in the highest degree, dangerous to the Constitution of this country and to the unity of the Empire, to show the smallest hesitation about the adoption of that principle. Therefore that principle for me is settled.

The second question—and it is equally an indispensable condition with the first—is this, Is Home Rule a thing compatible or incompatible with the unity of the Empire? Again and again, as may be in the recollection of Irish members, I

¹ When, out of 103 members, 85 Home Rulers were returned.

² Mr Parnell.

have challenged, in this House and elsewhere, explanations upon the subject, in order that we might have clear knowledge of what it was they so veiled under the phrase, not exceptionable in itself, but still open to a multitude of interpretations. Well, that question was settled in my mind on the first night of the present session,¹ when the hon. gentleman the leader of what is termed the Nationalist party from Ireland declared unequivocally that what he sought under the name of Home Rule was autonomy for Ireland. Autonomy is a name well known to European law and practice, as importing, under an historical signification sufficiently definite for every practical purpose, the management and control of the affairs of the territory to which the word is applied, and as being perfectly compatible with the full maintenance of Imperial unity. If any part of what I have said is open to challenge, it can be challenged by those who read my speeches, and I find that there are many readers of my speeches when there is anything to be got out of them and turned to account. I am quite willing to stand that test, and I believe that what I have said now is the exact and literal and absolute truth as to the state of the case.

I shall not dwell at any great length on the general argument in favour of the Bill; but I will notice one or two points that have been taken, and which, if they do not express any very definite argument, yet give expression to feelings which are entitled on my part to deference and respect. A great objection which is felt by some hon. gentlemen is much to this effect:—"Do not, in these great matters, experiment in politics; do not let us have this kind of legislation, uncertain as to its effect, involving great issues, and therefore liable to be marked—I may say stigmatised—by the name of experiment." Because, although in one sense every law is an experiment, yet I perfectly understand, and I am the first to admit, that experimenting in politics is a bad and a dangerous practice. Now, what is experimenting in politics? If I understand it, it is the practice of proposing grave changes without grave causes. Is this a case in which there is no grave cause with

¹ Jan. 21st.

which we have to deal? Why, sir, we have to deal with the gravest of all causes that can solicit the attention of a Legislature—namely, the fact that we have to treat the case of a country where the radical sentiment of the people is not in sympathy with the law. I defy any man, be he an opponent or not, to deny that we have to deal with the case of a country where the radical sentiment of the people is not in sympathy with the law. Of course, I am making general assertions. I do not say that an action on a bill of exchange between debtor and creditor in Ireland could not be settled without reference to any international prejudice. I speak of the most important parts of the law—of those parts which touch agricultural relations, the one great standing, pervading employment and occupation of the country—I speak above all of the criminal law, of the very first exigencies of political society; and I will not argue the question whether the criminal law of Ireland, especially when it concerns agricultural relations, has or has not the sympathy of the people until I find someone who is ready to say, after all he knows about evictions, about the operations of the Land League, and about the verdicts of juries, that the criminal law in Ireland has the sympathy of the people. Not only is this a matter of fact, but it is a matter of fact with which we are constantly dealing, which has run through three generations of men, and that almost without intermission.

We have tried expedients. What has been our great expedient? Our great expedient has been that to which I admit *prima facie* a Government will first and justifiably resort. Our first expedient has been that which is known as repression or coercion. Has that class of experiment, has that class of expedient, been successful? I argued this point at full length in introducing the Bill, and I will not argue it now at any detail whatsoever. I will only make this one assertion, which I believe to be absolutely undeniable—namely, that this medicine of coercion, if it be a medicine, is a medicine which we have been continually applying in increasing doses with diminishing results. When a physician has before him such a phenomenon

as that he should direct his attention and his efforts to some other quarter and to some other method. We have—and I am glad to admit it—tried remedies. I see it stated sometimes that nothing has been so miserable a failure as the course of remedial legislation with respect to Ireland with which the members of the present Government, and I myself for a long time, have been associated. I refer now to the removal of religious disabilities,¹ to the Disestablishment of the Church,² to the reform of the Land Laws,³ and to the removal—or, if not the absolute removal, to the enormous mitigation—of the intolerable grievances, perhaps the worst of all after the land grievance, under which Ireland used to labour with respect to education.⁴

If I am asked what I think of all these measures, I deny that they have failed. We have not failed, but we have not finished. They have had this effect—that the disease of Ireland has taken a different and a milder form. I am sorry to arouse scepticism whichever way I go. When I said just now that social order in Ireland was disturbed there were signs of dissent from hon. members opposite—and now when I say that the disease of Ireland has taken a milder form there are also signs of dissent, and it seems to me impossible that anything said by me can be true. My meaning is this—the disease of Ireland is in a milder form; but, in my opinion, it is in a form still extremely serious, and yet in a milder form than it took in 1832, when murders, excesses, and outrages were manifold to what they are now, so as to indicate a different state of things at the present time from what existed then, and an undoubted growth of what are known as law-abiding habits—or I might go further back to the dreadful rebellion of 1798, which took a great effort on the part of this country to put down. No, sir, that legislation has not failed. I admit

¹ Mr Fawcett's Bill for the Abolition of Religious Tests at the University of Dublin, 1873.

² 1869.

³ 1870, 1881.

⁴ 1845 (The Maynooth Act), and generally from the Chief Secretaryship of Mr Stanley (1830-33), who carried a measure of national education for Ireland.

that it is incomplete, that it has not reached, that it has not touched the goal, the terminating point of the race we had to run, and something yet remains to be done.

But there is another notion which has gone abroad. I have spoken of former expedients and remedies, but there is now a notion that something might be done by judicious mixtures of coercion and concessions. These judicious mixtures are precisely the very thing that we have tried. Go back to the Roman Catholic emancipation.¹ The Duke of Wellington made a judicious mixture upon that occasion. He proposed that we should open the doors of Parliament—and I am thankful he did so—to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, but he at the same time disfranchised the 40s. freeholder on the principle of judicious mixture. When Sir R. Peel in 1843-4 put Mr O'Connell on his trial, and succeeded in obtaining in Ireland a conviction which was afterwards quashed on a point of form that was a strong step in the direction of Coercion—but he followed it up immediately by the important Act² for enlarging the endowment of Maynooth, by an act for facilitating the granting of charitable bequests to the Roman Catholic Church, and I must also say—although it may shock some hon. gentlemen opposite—by a third Act, which was then viewed as a great boon to the Roman Catholic interest—namely, the Act for the foundation of undenominational colleges. There was another case of judicious mixture. It happened when we were disestablishing the Church there was great disorder in Westmeath, and in the middle, I think, of the Land Bill, we arrested the progress of that measure and introduced a very strong measure³ of coercion for Westmeath, all on the principle of judicious mixture. The Government which came into office in 1880 and which was put out of office in 1885—the whole course of that Government was nothing but one of rigid and incessant effort of judicious mixtures. Therefore do not let us suppose that the merit of novelty attaches to that recommendation.

But I have seen another recommendation made, and made, I

¹ 1829.

² 1845.

³ The Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act, 1870.

think, by a person of very great authority, I believe in my hearing, to the effect that if we could only cast away party spirit in dealing with Ireland we should do well. Then, I think, a good many hon. members opposite cheered, indicating that they were ready to cast away party spirit. What is meant by this? Is it meant that party spirit is to be expelled generally from the circuit of English politics? Is that so? Is there a dreamer who, in the wildness of his dreams, has imagined that you can really work the free institutions of this country upon any other principles than those in the main which your fathers have handed down to you and which have made the country what it is? Those cheers may be meant in sarcasm. I accept them in good faith. I believe that in uttering the words that I have just used I have quite as strong a meaning, and I am ready to act upon the principle which I have laid down quite as much, and perhaps a little more, than a great many hon. members opposite who cheered. It may be said, "We do not think you can get on altogether without party spirit, but do at any rate cast out party spirit from Irish affairs." Is that a more hopeful recommendation?

It will be convenient to take the case of the two sides of the House separately, and first I ask is it desirable that the Tory party should cast out party spirit? I should say—undoubtedly. But if I should press it upon the right hon. gentleman opposite he would be entitled to make an answer to me which I should feel to be a crushing answer, because he would say, "Before you talk of casting away party spirit from the handling of Irish affairs you must show that it has been applied to those affairs in some sense different from, and in a more guilty and more mischievous manner than that in which it has been applied to other affairs." I will not speak of the last year or two, during which there may have been strong prejudices. I will go back half a century to the time when great resistance was offered, and I, as an humble and as a silent follower, had my share of responsibility for that resistance. I mean the resistance¹ to the extension of the franchise in Ireland, especially

¹ 1836-40.

of the municipal franchise. I deeply lament that opposition was ever offered; I may say *quorum pars exigua fui*. The conduct of the Tory party of that day, under Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington, Lord Stanley, and Sir James Graham, although very mistaken, was perfectly honest. I am not prepared to say that Irish affairs have been handled in this House, speaking generally, by either party with a larger admixture of party feeling or with a smaller flavour of true patriotic tone than other affairs of the country. It is idle to set up as remedies, as alternatives, and as policies to adopt in great crises these suggestions which are totally visionary and unreal, and which never could become the basis of human action in a Legislative Assembly.

So much for experiment. Here I stand upon the ground that a great necessity is before us, that a growing and urgent evil requires to be dealt with, that some strong and adequate application to the case is requisite, and that the whole and the only question is whether the application we propose is the right one. Let me say this upon this particular question of a Legislature for Ireland, that it appears to be a very popular topic with our opponents, who say, "Why do you depart from the course taken by all the statesmen of the nineteenth century?" Now, let us see what has been done and said by all "the statesmen of the nineteenth century." The great case produced is the famous Repeal debate in 1834,¹ in which I myself was one of the majority who voted against the repeal of the Union. A very remarkable passage from a very remarkable speech² of Sir Robert Peel, well deserving to be kept fresh in the memory of posterity, from its terseness and power, has again become familiar to the people of this day, as I myself heard it with my own ears that day, with admiration. What was Sir Robert Peel then doing? In the first place, he was opposing the repeal of the Union. You call this repeal of the Union. You must at least allow us to have an opinion on that subject. For my part, I am not prepared at this moment to say that the question of the repeal of the Union should be

¹ O'Connell's motion was rejected by 523 to 38.

² April 25, 1834.

reopened. I may be right or wrong in that matter, but my opinion is that Ireland has done much, by wisdom and moderation, by bringing her essential demands within certain limits, to facilitate the task set before us. But even if this were repeal of the Union, I admit, without the least question, that up to a certain point the Union is upon its trial. I admit, without the least question, that in my opinion this Bill constitutes a most important modification of that Act. But was Sir Robert Peel in the same circumstances in 1834 as we found ourselves in 1884? He had had one generation of experience; we have had nearly three. In the days when he spoke, the Statute Book of England was loaded with a mass of Acts inflicting the most cruel grievances upon Ireland, and it was a perfectly rational opinion for a man like Lord Macaulay, who was deeply interested in Ireland, and other politicians of his character, to think that by the removal of those grievances you might save the Union. What was then a matter of reasoning and speculation has now become a matter of knowledge.

So Lord Macaulay is one who is quoted like Sir Robert Peel. I remember well a passage of splendid eloquence delivered by Lord Macaulay against the repeal of the Union, a Union of which I will not say anything more now than that I do not desire to rake up the history of that movement—a horrible and shameful history, for no epithets weaker than these can in the slightest degree describe or indicate ever so faintly the means by which, in defiance of the national sentiment of Ireland, consent to the Union was attained. I think in 1834, or not very distant from that date, Lord Macaulay, in words of burning eloquence, denounced the repeal of the Union. Lord Macaulay, I think in 1859, or certainly many years later in his life, if not so late as that, in his *Life of Pitt*,¹ declared that the Union without the measures which Mr Pitt finally hoped to procure from it—and to which in fact it became the greatest impediment—without those measures the Union was union only in name, and, being a union only in name, it was in rank opposi-

¹ In the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

tion to all the national and patriotic sentiment of Ireland. How was it possible that its authority could commend itself to the people of that country? I do not admit that the question of the Union, so far as it is now on its trial, has been decided, or has been touched, by statesmen of the nineteenth century. Those of whom I spoke never had before them what we have before us, the bitter fact, the rich though painful story of the experience which the rolling years of the last half-century have afforded us.

Well, then, sir, we are told again with extraordinary boldness, "Why do you depart from the old Whig traditions?" If there is one thing more than another which my hon. friend the Member for Bedford¹ was doing in his admirable speech which he delivered on this subject, it was in showing that he was acting in strict consonance and conformity with the old Whig traditions. What were the old Whig traditions? The organs of that tradition were Mr Sheridan and Lord Grey—the Lord Grey of that day—or rather the Mr Grey of that day, afterwards still more famous as Lord Grey. Then there were Lord Fitzwilliam, and, above all, Mr Fox, and even above Mr Fox himself there was Mr Burke. Upon this great subject of the relations with Ireland Mr Burke never modified by one hair's breadth the generous and wise declaration of his youth and of his maturer manhood. Mr Burke did not live to the date of the Union, but he placed on record in the first place his political adhesion to the opinions of Mr Grattan, and in the second place he placed upon record his full satisfaction with the state of things that prevailed in Ireland—the political state of things, especially the Acts of 1782 and 1783,² and in a letter written not long before his lamented death, he said that he trusted that Ireland had seen the last of her revolutions. By that he meant that the Act of 1782 did amount to a revolution—a blessed and peaceful revolution, but still a revolution—a revolution effected by those peaceful means, by that bold and

¹ Mr Whitbread.

² Whereby legislative independence was granted to Ireland.

wise British statesmanship, such as in 1844, and again at a later period, was commended by Lord Beaconsfield.¹

It may be said with perfect truth that Lord Grey declined at a later date to be a party to the repeal of the Union. In that respect, in my opinion, he was perfectly consistent. For my own part, if I may refer to myself, I do not at all regret the vote which I gave fifty-two years ago against the repeal of the Union, considering what that repeal involved, and considering the amount of information we had with regard to its working. The Union, whatever may be our opinion with regard to the means by which it was obtained, was a statute of vast importance, for it modified and in many respects transformed the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. Such a statute as that cuts deep tracks in history; those tracks cannot be effaced in later times. But we are acting in most complete conformity with Whig traditions and the principles upon which Whig statesmen founded their action. They did not say that the principle of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland was abstractly bad; they did not say, "We in our minds are opposed to it, and therefore Ireland and Great Britain shall not have it;" but they said it was opposed to the sentiment of the Irish people. They said it was in opposition to all that was most honourable and upright, most respected, and most disinterested in Ireland, and nothing but mischief, nothing but disorder, nothing but dishonour, could come from a policy founded upon the overriding of all those noble qualities, and by means which would not bear the face of day, imposing the arbitrary will of the Legislature upon the nation, in spite of its almost unanimous opposition.

Now, sir, it should be borne in mind that there was at that time in existence the greatest difference of sentiment from what we now witness in Ireland. The north was more opposed to the Union probably than the south. I remember that the town of Cork used to be quoted as a spot on which love of the Union might be detected by the careful observer. Unquestionably the promises held out by Mr Pitt did induce a division of sentiment

¹ In a debate on the State of Ireland, Feb. 16, 1844.

among the Roman Catholic clergy of that time. I believe that the Irish national patriotic sentiment which I have mentioned with sympathy was more vivid in the north of Ireland than in any other quarter.

Well, sir, hon. gentlemen say, "Do not talk to us about foreign countries; do not talk to us about British colonies; do not mention Canada—it has nothing whatever to do with the case. Canada is loyal and content; Ireland is disloyal and disaffected." But Sir Charles Gavan Duffy in an able paper¹ admits the charge. He says:—"When it was determined to confer Home Rule on Canada, Canada was in the precise temper attributed to Ireland. She did not get Home Rule because she was loyal and friendly, but she is loyal and friendly because she got Home Rule." Now, sir, I am on this subject able to speak as a witness. I sat in Parliament during the whole of the Canadian controversy,² and I even took, what was for me as a young member, an active part in the discussions upon the subject. And what was that Canadian controversy? The case of Canada is not parallel to the case of Ireland. It does not agree in every particular, and the Bill which we offer to Ireland is different in many important particulars from the Acts which have disposed of the case of Canada. But although it is not parallel, it is analogous. It is strictly and substantially analogous. What, sir, was the issue in the case of Canada? Government from Downing Street. These few words embrace the whole controversy—Government from Downing Street being, of course, under the Government of St Stephen's.

What was the cry of those who resisted the concession of autonomy to Canada? It was the cry which has slept for a long time, and which has acquired vigour from sleeping—it was the cry with which we are now becoming familiar—the cry of the unity of the Empire. Well, sir, in my opinion the relation with Canada was one of very great danger to the unity of the Empire at that time, but it was the remedy for the mischief, and not the mischief itself, which was regarded as dangerous to the

¹ "Mr Gladstone's Irish Constitution," in the *Contemporary Review*. May 1886.

² 1834-40.

unity of the Empire. Here I contend that the cases are precisely parallel, and that there is danger to the unity of the Empire in your relations with Ireland; but unfortunately, while you are perfectly right in raising the cry, you are applying the cry and the denunciation to the remedy, whereas you ought to apply it to the mischief.

In those days what happened? In those days habitually in this House the mass of the people of Canada were denounced as rebels. Some of them were Protestants, and of English and Scotch birth. The majority of them were Roman Catholic, and of French extraction. The French rebelled. Was that because they were of French extraction and because they were Roman Catholics? No, sir; for the English of Upper Canada did exactly the same thing. They both of them rebelled, and perhaps I may mention—if I may enliven the strain of the discussion for a moment—that I remember Mr O'Connell, who often mingled wit and humour with his eloquence in those days when the discussion was going on with regard to Canada, and when Canada was the one dangerous question—the one question which absorbed interest in this country as the great question of the hour—when we were engaged in that debate, Mr O'Connell intervened, and referred to the well-known fact that a French orator and statesman named Papineau had been the promoter and the leader of the agitation in Canada; and what said Mr O'Connell? He said:—"The case is exactly the case of Ireland, with this difference, that in Canada the agitator had got the 'O' at the end of his name instead of at the beginning." Well, these subjects of Her Majesty rebelled—were driven to rebellion and were put down. We were perfectly victorious over them, and what then happened? Directly the military victory was assured—as Mr Burke told the men of the day of the American War—the moment the military victory was assured the political difficulty began. Did they feel it? They felt it; they gave way to it. The victors were the vanquished, for if we were victors in the field we were vanquished in the arena of reason. We acknowledged that we were vanquished, and within two years we gave complete autonomy to Canada. And now

gentlemen have forgotten this great lesson of history. By saying that the case of Canada has no relation to the case of Ireland, I refer to that little sentence written by Sir Charles Duffy, who himself exhibits in his own person as vividly as anybody the transition from a discontented to a loyal subject. "Canada did not get Home Rule because she was loyal and friendly, but she has become loyal and friendly because she has got Home Rule."

Now I come to another topic, and I wish to remind you as well as I can of the definition of the precise issue which is at the present moment placed before us. In the introduction of this Bill¹ I ventured to say that its object was to establish, by the authority of Parliament, a legislative body to sit in Dublin for the conduct of both legislation and administration under the conditions which may be prescribed by the Act defining Irish as distinctive from Imperial affairs. I laid down five, and five only, essential conditions which we deemed it to be necessary to observe. The first was the maintenance of the unity of the Empire. The second was political equality. The third was the equitable distribution of Imperial burdens. The fourth was the protection of minorities. And the fifth was that the measure which we proposed to Parliament—I admit that we must stand or fall by this definition quite as much as by any of the others—that the measure should present the essential character and characteristics of a settlement of the question.

Well, sir, that has been more briefly defined in a resolution² of the Dominion Parliament of Canada, with which, although the definition was simpler than my own, I am perfectly satisfied. In their view there are three vital points which they hope will be obtained, and which they believe to be paramount, and theirs is one of the most remarkable and significant utterances which have passed across the Atlantic to us on this grave political question. ["Oh! oh!"] I just venture to put to the test the

¹ See p. 17.

² "That . . . this House earnestly hopes that such measures will be adopted by the Imperial Parliament as will, while preserving the integrity and well-being of the Empire, and the rights and status of the minority, be satisfactory to the people of Ireland, and as will permanently remove the discontent so long unhappily prevailing in that country."

question of the equity of those gentlemen. You seem to consider that these manifestations are worthless. Had these manifestations taken place in condemnation of the Bills and policy of the Government, would they have been so worthless?

A question so defined—for the establishment of a legislative body to have effective control of legislation and administration in Ireland for Irish affairs, and subject to those conditions about which, after all, there does not appear in principle to be much difference of opinion among us—that is the question on which the House is called upon to give a vote, as solemn and as important as almost, perhaps, any in the long and illustrious records of its history.

Sir, in the interval which has taken place since the introduction of the Bill much discussion has arisen upon a variety of its particulars, which I am very far from grumbling at or complaining of. One of them, however, is exciting so much feeling that it is quite necessary that it should receive the notice of my colleagues and of myself in the present debate. I mean that which relates to the exclusion or disappearance—for it really can hardly be called an exclusion when it is rather desired and sought for by the parties themselves—of the Irish members from the benches of this House.

Now, sir, in this explanation which I am about to give, I do not address myself to those who are hostile to the principle of this Bill. I wish with all my heart I could say something without vitally prejudicing the public interests involved in this measure, that would tend to reconcile or to abridge the differences between Her Majesty's Government and a body of gentlemen with whom hitherto they have had the happiness of acting in as perfect concord—allowing for the necessary freedom of human opinion and the occasional differences that may arise—as ever consolidated together the different sections of the Liberal party. Unhappily, sir, while I have the most cordial respect for those gentlemen, I am not able to promise myself that they will listen with much interest to what I have got to say. There are others who, as I believe, accept not less cordially than Her Majesty's Government themselves what I have

declared to be the principle of this Bill, and who at the same time see greater difficulties than we do—though we have seen great difficulties all along, and I never represented this measure as one in which all the points were clearly indisputable. The case bristles with difficulties of detail throughout, which only require good will and patient intelligence to deal with, and different men feel them in different modes and different degrees.

What has happened, sir, is this. I do not deny the fact that many friends of this measure, whom we should be loth indeed to alienate, have taken strong objection to the provisions with respect to the future absence of Irish members from this House under two heads. In the first place, they recall a proposition which I myself stated very strongly in introducing the Bill—namely, the great political principle that there ought not to be taxation without representation. In that I stated what was an obvious truth. It is quite evident that we never would enforce upon Ireland taxation without representation, and nothing but the consent of Ireland could have induced Her Majesty's Government to contemplate such a thing for a single moment. But many gentlemen—and I do not find fault with them—are not satisfied even with the consent of Ireland. Gentlemen will recollect that though we now hear sometimes of persons being more Popish than the Pope, and many phrases of that kind, the original phrase was *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*. The meaning of that phrase was this—that those English families, those portions of the English race, who went and planted themselves amongst the Irishry, after a moderate time became more Irish than the Irish themselves. We have had that illustrated wholesale on the present occasion. I must own that this is a difficulty which I regard with respect and with sympathy, and I trust that in any attempt to meet it I shall have the sympathy of the House in general—at all events, of those who can on any terms tolerate the principle of this Bill. Besides that objection—which is an objection strictly upon argumentative and constitutional grounds as respects taxation—there is undoubtedly another sentiment more vague,

less definite, in a different region of the human mind; there is a sentiment of regret that there should cease to be a symbolical manifestation of the common concern of Ireland with ourselves in the unity of the Empire, and in the transaction of Imperial affairs.

Well, now, sir, how do we stand with regard to this case? First of all, let me say, however much it may appear to be a paradox to English members, yet history undoubtedly teaches us that, to whatever cause it may be due, foreign affairs, what I may call over-sea affairs, do not stand in exactly the same relations to Ireland as they do to England and Scotland. This is what I mean—I am not raising any disputable proposition—I mean the feeling of the people; and it appears to me perfectly natural that the inhabitants of a country like Ireland, whose difficulties have been so great, whose woes have been innumerable, whose hopes have been intermittent and continually disappointed—the history of a country like that must throw back the mind of the people upon itself and its own concerns, and in that way it is that I can understand why it is that Irish gentlemen do now—what we all do if we are men of common sense in the common affairs of life—that is, we look to the principle, and do not think so much about objects which in our view are secondary as that which is central and essential, that which is central and essential being the management of Irish affairs. What I am now going to say has not had so much notice as it deserves. Ireland is not so entirely excluded by the Bill as it stands from Imperial affairs as gentlemen may be disposed to think. I refer, and I by no means refer alone, to the principle which is contained in the 39th clause of the Bill—the clause which provides for the recall of Irish representatives of both Houses before this House can proceed to any alteration of the statute upon which the two Legislatures are not in accord. I hope that is a provision which there will be little, if any, occasion for putting into action. But the principle involved is an important principle.

Besides that, there is another clause which provides that in certain circumstances the Irish Assembly may vote sums of

money in relation to subjects which are excluded from its ordinary cognisance. This provision has been misunderstood to mean that the Irish legislative body might in certain circumstances vote money for the establishment of a Church.

Well, sir, I have really not examined whether the words of the statute will bear such a construction as has been put upon them. But if they bear such a construction, undoubtedly an effectual remedy ought to be applied. The meaning of the words is simply this—our belief in drawing the Act was this—that it might be felt right in the event—as I trust the improbable event of a great war—wherein this country and Ireland were engaged with a common feeling and common interest, for the Crown to send a message to the Irish legislative body to ask them freely to testify their participation in our interests and privileges by voting money and supplies. [Laughter.] Some gentlemen differ from me as to the measure by which they estimate the ludicrous and the serious. My own estimates are sometimes in an inverse relation to theirs. What they think ludicrous seems to me to be serious, and possibly *vice versa*. It is supposed to be ridiculous that a practically independent body in Ireland—yes, practically independent in the regular exercise of its statutory functions—should entertain such a proposal. But it was not ridiculous when Ireland had an independent Parliament.

I said just now that it was a wonderful thing to see how little in other days Ireland had interposed in foreign affairs. I have had the debates looked up during the whole period of Grattan's Parliament, and if I except certain discussions relating to foreign treaties of commerce—I will speak of that matter by-and-by—there are only two occasions upon which that Parliament debated foreign affairs, so far as I can discover. Both of those occasions are occasions on which by message from the Crown they were invited to vote sums of money for purposes of war. One of them was in 1790, when there was a seizure of British vessels by Spanish men-of-war. A vote of money was then asked and was given. The second was in 1795, when a contribution was asked towards the expenses of

the French War. On the first occasion the Irish Parliament granted the money without question. I do not believe myself that pecuniary illiberality has ever been a vice of Ireland. On the second occasion they granted it, but moved an amendment, full, I think, of good sense, hoping for a speedy conclusion of hostilities. For my part, I heartily wish that prayer of the Irish Parliament had been complied with. I take blame to myself for not having explained to the House the provision to which I have just referred—namely, the provision for the voting of money by the Irish legislative body in answer to the message from the Crown. But my right hon. friend the Chief Secretary¹ will bear me out when I say that after I had spoken I remarked to him that I regretted the omission of which I had been guilty.

Moreover, sir, although the statute will limit the legislative powers of the Irish legislative body, there are other moral powers of influence which it will possess, and which we do not and cannot limit. The privilege of free speech is not going to be taken away from Ireland—that privilege of free speech will attach to the members of this legislative body and to the legislative body collectively, and a considerable influence may be exercised upon proceedings at Westminster through resolution and by address from the legislative body.

However, sir, while I wish these provisions to be understood, I do not mean to limit what I have to say by reference to them. I wish to say what Her Majesty's Government have thought to be their duty with regard to the feeling which has been copiously expressed in many portions of the country by gentlemen friendly to the principle of the Bill. Undoubtedly it is our plain duty to consider how far we can go without prejudice to the main purpose of the Bill to meet that desire. We shall do that upon grounds of policy, and upon grounds of principle. We shall make willing steps in that direction as far as duty will permit us to go. There are three things which I had better at once say we cannot do, and are unwilling to entertain in any shape. We are not willing to

¹ Mr John Morley.

break up the Parliamentary traditions of this House, or to introduce a principle of confusion into the working of the House. That is the first. The second is, we are not willing to fetter against its will the action of the Irish legislative body in any case except where cardinal and Imperial interests require it. We will do nothing that shall have the effect of placing our measure in such a condition that Ireland, through her representatives, can only offer to it a qualified and a grudging, instead of a free, cordial assent and acceptance. And, third, we can do nothing that will have the effect of placing the Committee of the Bill before the second reading. That may be a phrase mysterious to some, but the meaning of it is this—that to determine in detail, even if upon points of importance, everything which is of great interest touching this Bill, before you obtain assent to the principle of the Bill, is not practicable; and if it be practicable, the rules of this House are based upon folly, for undoubtedly it would be much more convenient in many respects, before you are called upon to assent to the principle of a Bill, to have it in the exact form in which it is to be finally adopted.

There is another thing to be considered, and it is this. It has very often happened to me in the course of a great experience in Parliamentary legislation, that you hold communications with one class of gentlemen—you happen to be good-tempered or bad-tempered as the case may be—you feel a great desire to meet the views of that class of gentlemen, and you unwarily pledge yourself to propose the thing they desire. It is settled within the four walls of a private room. Then you come into this House, which happily—I thank God for it—is the place of the most thorough publicity in the whole world, and you find other sets of persons, quite as much entitled to be heard, who are at daggers drawn with the first. But the Government has unwarily committed itself; and a quarrel ensues, while it is perfectly possible that if they had been allowed to reserve their discretion, and freely to consider the particulars in the Committee, they might have been able to find means to conciliate those of opposite views,

so as to bring about general satisfaction. What I mean is this, and I think the House will agree with me,—I admit that when a thing is right, and when you see it to be practicable, you may promise before the second reading of a Bill that if agreeable to the House you will do it. But we cannot do more than promise a fair consideration hereafter to a fair proposal, unless it is such a proposal as we can see our way to embodying in a workable shape. I do not think that is an unfair proposal. In violation of these three conditions we can do nothing. But we are ready and willing to do everything that they will allow.

Then I take the first objection that has been made to the proposed exclusion of the Irish representatives from this Parliament. It is that the principle that representation should accompany taxation would thereby be violated. Now what I am about to say involves a considerable responsibility; but the question whether and how far the difficulty may be met has been considered, and I am prepared to say that we can give full satisfaction to those who advance this objection. If agreeable to the House, we will meet it in Committee by providing that when a proposal is made to alter the taxation in respect of Customs and Excise, Irish members shall have an opportunity of appearing in this House to take a share in the transaction of that business. It will then be impossible to urge against the Bill that it is proposed by the Government that representation should not accompany taxation.

In regard to such matters of common interest between Great Britain and Ireland as those which form the subject of foreign treaties, no doubt the objections urged from some quarters may be met in some considerable degree by the adoption of a system of executive communications, which is the system adopted in certain foreign countries. There are cases in which two countries are disunited in their Legislatures, but united in national action and feeling. They find themselves able, by executive communications, to provide for the common handling of common subjects. But we do not feel that the plan of executive communications need of necessity be the only one.

There are various plans which have been proposed in order to indicate and maintain common action on Imperial subjects, and which are well worthy of consideration. For example, it has been proposed that a joint Commission should be appointed representing the Houses of Parliament on this side of the water, and representing the Irish legislative body in due proportion of members, and that that Commission should meet from time to time as occasion might arise during the Session of Parliament to consider common questions and report their opinions to both legislative bodies upon many, at any rate, of the Imperial matters that are reserved by the Bill as it stands. I hesitate to say upon "any" of those questions, for I incline to the belief, for example, that the question relating to the succession of the Crown—in all the different branches of the subject—ought not to go to any secondary authority. But I can conceive that many subjects, such, for example, as treaties of commerce, might well be considered by a Commission of this kind. I do not say of this plan as absolutely as I do of the plan as to taxation, that we are quite ready to propose it if it be the wish of Parliament, for it has been little canvassed, and objections may be raised to it which we have failed to anticipate: but I can say that we look at the proposal as one which might satisfy jealousies, might have other advantages, and is not open, so far as we know, to serious objection.

Another proposal is that a joint Committee of the kind which I have described could be appointed to consider how far and upon what conditions other than those provided in the statute Irish members should come here. There is yet another suggestion, that Irish members might be entitled to come to Parliament—I assume generally that corresponding opportunity would be given to Irish peers—upon occasions when the legislative body should, by an address to the Crown, have expressed a desire that they should do so. I do not say that that is open to objection on principle. At the same time, I see considerable difficulties as to the particular way of making it a practicable plan. I will, however, state broadly that it is our duty to give an unprejudiced ear to proposals which others may

make for the purpose of insuring the continued manifestation of common interest between Great Britain and Ireland in Imperial concerns. That end, we say distinctly, is a good end; means for attaining it we regard with favour, subject to the condition that they shall not be so handled as to introduce into this House the principle of confusion, nor so handled as to impose on the Irish legislative body limitations of its liberty in any matters except such as affect high Imperial policy. (LORD R. CHURCHILL asked whether the Irish members would reappear in their full numbers.) I am much obliged to the noble lord. The clause now in the Bill contemplating the recall of the Irish representatives in a certain contingency makes no difference from the present arrangements as to the numbers in which they would come. We do not feel that the subject involves a vital principle, nor have we arrived at any binding decision; but my own personal opinion is that if we were to bring back the Irish members in any other numbers than the present we should first have to devise a new system of election, and I am not sure that it would be wise to complicate the matter in that way. I should be inclined to hope that, so far as it is desirable that Irish members should reappear in Parliament, the Irish people would be liberally and amply, rather than scantily and jealously, represented.

There is only one other subject to which I must advert. We propose a change of which, if viewed as an abstract and speculative change, the postponement for a year or even longer would not have been a matter of vital consequence. But this concession, if you like to call it so—in my view it is something much higher than a concession, it is a great reformation and improvement—this change is not proposed upon grounds of general expediency alone, or in the view of abstract improvement alone; it is proposed in order to meet the first necessity of civilised society. Social order is not broken up in Ireland, it is undermined, it is sapped, and by general and universal confession it imperatively requires to be dealt with. It is because this measure is one for the restoration of social order by the removal, not merely of the symptoms but of the cause of

the mischief, that we recommend it to the consideration of Parliament. We are all agreed up to a certain point—(An hon. member: “No”)—all except a solitary gentleman opposite. We all agree upon this, that social order in Ireland imperatively requires to be dealt with, but when we come to the method, then, unfortunately, our differences come into view. Were I to take all the individual opinions that have been expressed as to the mode of dealing with Irish questions, I should simply bewilder the House. I will only look at the main and leading divisions of power and influence in this assembly.

There are in the House two great parties, independently of the Irish party, and there is a third body, whom I will not call a party, because I am happy to think that as a party we are not yet divided from them, and I trust may never be. But we are vitally divided on this great and significant question from those whom I will not call a party, but whom I must call a body, but who are so important that they may possibly hold the balance and decide the question between the two great British parties in this House. The mass of the Irish representatives have committed in the eyes of many gentlemen opposite a new, a mortal offence—an offence more deadly than any former offence. They have committed the offence of agreeing with us in this matter. As long as their favours were bestowed in another quarter¹ great toleration was to be expected, and was happily experienced, by them from those who are now very much shocked in their highest moral qualities at our alliance with the Irish party, which alliance amounts simply to a coincidence of views on a great vital and determining public question.

Of the two political parties in the House both have spoken, and spoken plainly. I do, indeed I must, admire the tact, the caution, I will not say the astuteness, with which most of the leaders of the Tory party have abstained from overmuch hurrying themselves with forecasts of the future, or pledges as to the mode of meeting it, with regard to the Irish question. Finding

¹ The Council of Irish Nationalists called upon their fellow-countrymen in Great Britain to vote against the Liberals at the General Election of November 1885.

that they had on this side of the House allies—I do not use the word in an invidious sense, it is the same kind of alliance that there is with gentlemen from Ireland—that is to say, it is an honourable and conscientious coincidence of opinion—finding that they had allies of that kind ready to do their work, with equal politeness and wisdom, they have left the doing of that work to them. But notwithstanding that, they have spoken and spoken plainly for themselves. When the noble lord the Member for Paddington¹ was brought to the point, and when it was said he had not declared a policy, he pointed—and he was justified in pointing—not even to a phrase, but to a date, and he said:—“Our policy is the 26th of January.”² I accept that reply from the noble lord. It is true and it is just, and that was, and that is, the declaration of policy for Ireland from the Tory party.

I remember, and many others may recollect, the fervid and almost endless cheering with which the gentlemen then sitting on this side of the House accepted the announcement of the 26th of January. That is a plain, manly, and straightforward announcement. What was it? The notice did not convey, and we could not expect that it should convey, a full description of the proposals that were to be made; but it so far described them that it indicated one point with perfect clearness, and that was the suppression of the National League. I may say, in parenthesis, that I trust that we shall be suppressors of the National League. That, if it comes about, will certainly be by a different process. The suppression of the National League—what does it mean and what does it come to?

A noble friend³ of mine, to whom I refer with the greatest respect, when he held office in Ireland, said:—“We want to drive discontent under the ground.” I own I thought at the time that that expression was what is called a slip of the tongue, and I suppose there is no man among us who does not

¹ Lord Randolph Churchill.

² On that day the late Government gave notice that a Bill would be introduced “for the purpose of suppressing the National League and other dangerous associations, for the prevention of intimidation and for the protection of life, property, and public order in Ireland.”

³ Earl Cowper.

occasionally slip into that form of error. But if, instead of its being a slip of the tongue, it is exalted into a policy, then what is the meaning of the suppression of the National League? It is the conversion of the proceedings of that body—which I am not now called upon to discuss or characterise—it is the conversion of the proceedings of that body, taken daringly but openly in the face of day, into the proceedings of secret societies—the last resort in this and other countries of the extreme and hopeless difficulties of political problems; and, in my opinion, nothing is to be gained by procuring and bringing about the substitution of the secret communities for the open action of a body like the National League.

It is sought apparently to take away discontent from the surface. We are not contented with so limited an ambition. We desire to take away discontent neck and crop. We desire to abolish it root and branch, or, if I may once more put into requisition a phrase which had its day, we desire to abolish Irish discontent “bag and baggage.” I do not believe that Parliament would pass a proposal for the abolition, in the present circumstances, of the National League. If it did pass such a proposal, in my opinion it is doubtful whether it would have made any contribution whatever to a real solution of the Irish difficulty; whether, on the contrary, it would not have administered a new aggravation to it. However that may be, I own that that party has spoken plainly, and their policy is summed up in the words “repression or coercion.”

When this Government was formed it was formed on the principle of looking for some method of dealing with Ireland other than by the method of coercion; and that policy has now taken definite form and shape in the proposal of autonomy for Ireland. You have spoken plainly and we have spoken plainly. Has the third power in the House spoken plainly? Has that power which is to hold the scales, and which may decide the issue, told the country in what manner, when it is forced to face this tremendous problem, it intends to deal with it?

There are few men in this House, I am sure there is no man outside of it, who does not admire the temper and the courage

with which my noble friend the Member for Rossendale¹ has behaved on this question. In obedience to his conscience, and to his conscience alone, he has rent asunder with pain, and perhaps with agony, party ties to which he has been among the most faithful of all adherents. And speaking generally of those who act with him, I believe that in their several spheres the same may be said of them. Nor do I feel, although I may lament that they have come under what I think are narrow and blind influences, that their titles to my respect are one whit diminished by what they have said or done. I make these admissions freely and without stint. My noble friend has assumed an immense responsibility. It is not for me to find fault with those who assume immense responsibility. My responsibility in this matter is perhaps even greater than his. Next to mine, and you will never find me here to extenuate it, I know no subject of Her Majesty that has a greater load of responsibility upon him than my noble friend. I do not blame, I have no title to blame, him. All honour and praise to him for his undertaking the task which I know to be of enormous difficulty. But it may be a task of leading the determining and superior forces of Parliamentary opinion towards a conclusion on the Irish question. If that is so, I ask what does he mean to do? Has not the time arrived when we ought to know what his policy is to be?

I have endeavoured to search it out by such means as I could. Is it to be the policy announced to the Loyalist minority at Belfast in November last? [A HOME RULE MEMBER: "So-called 'Loyalist minority.'"] I assume the phrase. In politics I like to give to every class of men the name by which they like to be called. Well, sir, in Belfast my noble friend made very considerable promises on the 5th of last November, and he said an extremely bold thing—"I should not shrink," he said, "from a great and bold reconstruction of the Irish Government." Well, all I can say is this, that we who are now the Government are exceedingly daring; but our

¹ Lord Hartington, now Duke of Devonshire; he had spoken at Belfast on the preceding November 5th.

daring is nothing like yours. The man who will undertake to reconstruct the Irish Government without touching the legislative principle from which administrative government derives its life, if he is not "a traitor or a fool"—these are words not ours, but are reserved for gentlemen quite different from us—he is either a magician or a man not much accustomed to the practical transaction of public affairs.

That is not all, sir. My noble friend did not stop by promising, in the exuberance of his zeal, that which I am convinced is absolutely impossible—namely, to re-construct the Irish Government for any practical purpose without providing a new spring of action, which can only be provided on the principle of the policy we propose. But my noble friend did not promise absolutely the principle of the policy we propose, because he said that nothing could be done in the direction of giving Ireland anything like complete control over her own affairs, either in a day or a session or perhaps a Parliament. But he pointed to the means by which it was to be done—namely, by the work of time, by the growth of small beginnings the superstructure was to be raised on a wise and sound foundation. Yes, but what is the principle really at issue between us? It is this, not whether we are right in proposing at one step to give to Ireland complete control of her own affairs, but whether it is a thing right to be done at all. At Belfast in November my noble friend in this passage implied that it might be a thing right to be done. To-night he is to move that it is a thing wrong to be done. What, then, is his policy? I am sorry to think that since November the movement of my noble friend has not been forwards, but rather, as it appears to me, backwards. We have heard nothing since November of this complete reconstruction of the Irish Government, and the gradual progress on a sound foundation of a well-built structure. But I rejoice in that declaration on one ground—namely, that it implies that the complete control by Ireland of her own affairs is a thing which may be contemplated, and that, in the view of my noble friend, it is a thing compatible with the unity of the Empire. Therefore I am convinced that it is not a thing

to be renounced ab initio—to be renounced and proscribed as a something tending to disintegrate and break up the unity of the Empire.

I confess that I do not believe in this gradual superstructure. I believe the meaning of it would be, if practicable, that a series of boons would be offered to Ireland, every one of which would, with an enormous loss of Parliamentary time and temper, and with an immense obstruction of public business, be either entirely repudiated by Ireland, or be received in a grudging temper and with the fullest notification that whatever power of that kind you gave her would be used simply as an instrument for acquiring more power. I am very disinterested upon that subject. I should have disappeared from the scene while my noble friend's process was in a very early stage indeed. But I own I do not believe that that is the wisest method of dealing with the great Irish question. I believe we have reached one of those crises in the history of nations where the path of boldness is the path, and the only path, of safety. At least we have come to a time when there is one thing we ought to know, and that is our own minds. We ought to know and we ought to tell our minds. There is another thing which I hold to be essential—we ought not to take this great Irish question, and cast the fate of Ireland into the lottery of politics. I think it is obvious that I am not open to the reproach of casting the fate of Ireland into the lottery of politics, because what you tell me is that I am steering Ireland to utter destruction and certain ruin. If we are proposing to drive Ireland down the cataract, point out to us the way of escape. Is it really to be supposed that the last declaration of my noble friend, which was the keeping alive of two or three clauses of the Crimes Act, which we intended to have kept in existence had we remained in office last year—is that really the policy for Ireland? To that no assent, no approval has been given from the important party opposite.

Sir, Parliament is entitled to know at this time of day the alternatives that are open to its choice. You say that we offer the alternative of ruin. At any rate, in our view it is of a very

different character. But even in your view, it is a definite proposal, which is our justification on its behalf, and is the only contribution which we can make to the solution of the question. Parliament is entitled to have before it the alternatives proposed—the alternatives of policy, not of plan, proposed by those who are taking steps which may in certain contingencies with high probability bring into their hands the supreme direction of affairs. The Tory party have announced their policy. Repression—the 26th of January. That is a policy I understand. Here I know with whom, and with what, I have to deal. But as regards my noble friend, I must say that I am totally ignorant with whom, and with what, I am dealing, so far as policy is concerned. I hope that the notice he has given for to-night has been given with the intention of tracing out for us a palpable and visible road into the darkness, and that he will tell us on what principle it is that he proposes to make provision for the government of Ireland. Let us know these alternatives. The more they are examined the better I believe it will be for us all. It will become reasonably clear—I won't say to demonstration—that we have before us a great opportunity of putting an end to the controversy of 700 years—aye, and of knitting together, by bonds firmer and higher in their character than those which heretofore we have mainly used, the hearts and affections of this people and the noble fabric of the British Empire.

HOME RULE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 7, 1886.

The Debate on the Second Reading of the Government of Ireland Bill lasted twelve nights, and was concluded by Mr Gladstone's reply on this night. The Bill was rejected by 341 to 311. "The largest division ever known."—*The Times*, June 8. Mr Gladstone appealed to the country.

MR SPEAKER,—I shall venture to make, sir, a few remarks on the speech of the right hon. gentleman,¹ but I will first allow myself the satisfaction of expressing what I believe to be a very widespread sentiment, and saying with what pleasure I listened to two speeches this evening—the singularly eloquent speech of the senior Member for Newcastle² and the masterly exposition—for I cannot call it less—of the hon. Member for Cork.³ Sir, I feel a strong conviction that speeches couched in that tone, marked alike by sound statesmanship and far-seeing moderation, will never fail to produce a lasting effect upon the minds and convictions of the people of England and Scotland. Sir, with respect to the personal question which has arisen between the hon. Member for Cork and the right hon. gentleman opposite, I think it no part of my duty to interfere. I have avoided, and I shall avoid, in the discussion of this question, so far as I can, all matters which are of a purely polemical character between party and party. I presume that this subject will be carried further. I understand a distinct allegation to be made by the hon. Member for Cork with regard to some person, whose name he does not

¹ Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, in the course of whose speech Mr Parnell had referred to his communication with Lord Carnarvon. See the next speech, and p. 312.

² Mr Joseph Cowen.

³ Mr Parnell.

give, but who is one of a limited body. In that limited body it will not be difficult, I conclude, to procure it if it can be given. Upon that I pass no judgment. I simply make this comment upon a subject which is of considerable public interest. The right hon. gentleman opposite will do me the justice to say that I have not sought, before taking office or since taking it, to make the conduct which right hon. gentlemen opposite pursued on their accession to power, matter of reproach against them. If they do not like to do me that justice I shall not ask it.

On the speech of the right hon. gentleman I need not dwell at great length. He began by stating a series of what he succinctly described as simple facts. I will not say his simple facts are pure fictions, because that would hardly, perhaps, be courteous. But they are as devoid of foundation as if they had been pure fiction. The right hon. gentleman declared—though I do not see that it has much to do with the matter—that this is the Bill of one man. Well, I am amazed that the right hon. gentleman speaks as if he had been at my elbow all day and every day through the autumn and winter of last year. How can any man know that this is the Bill of one man? [A laugh.] How can the hon. member who laughs know that this is the Bill of one man? Reference is made to the allegations of my right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham.¹ My right hon. friend could only speak within the compass of his knowledge, and if he said that it was the Bill of one man he would know no more about it than the hon. member opposite. What my right hon. friend said, and said truly, was to state the time at which the Bill came before the Cabinet. But, sir, long before that time the subject of the Bill and its leading details had been matter of anxious consideration between me and my nearest political friends. [Cries of "Name!"] I never heard a more extraordinary demand in my life, not to say gross impropriety. I refer to those of my colleagues who were most likely to give the most valuable aid, and with whom from the first I was in communication. Then, sir, the right hon. gentleman says we were installed in office by the help of

¹ Mr Chamberlain.

the hon. Member for Cork. The right hon. gentleman appears to have forgotten the elementary lessons of arithmetic. It is perfectly true that the energetic assistance of the hon. Member for Cork might have kept the right hon. gentleman in office. The right hon. gentleman speaks of the party behind him and the Liberal party, as it then was on this side of the House, as if they had been two equal parties, and only required the hon. Member for Cork and his friends to turn the scale. [LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL: They were.] They were, says the noble lord! The noble lord's arithmetic is still more defective—335 is by 85 votes a larger party than 250. Then the right hon. gentleman says that, with the exception of the customs and excise duties, no change was made in the Bill after it was first submitted to the Cabinet. He has no means of knowing that, even if it were true, but it happens to be entirely untrue. Provisions of great importance had never been seen by my right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham. My right hon. friend took exception to certain provisions of the Bill without being acquainted with the whole *corpus* of the Bill. That is the fact; so that the right hon. gentleman is entirely wrong also upon this as well as upon his other "simple facts." Then the right hon. gentleman says that I had announced that this Bill was not to be reconstructed. I announced that I did not promise that it should be reconstructed. [A laugh.] There are actually gentlemen opposite—members of Parliament chosen to represent the country—who think this a matter of laughter, and can see no distinction between promises that a Bill shall not be reconstructed, and not having promised that it shall be. I conceive that a person who has promised that a Bill shall be reconstructed is bound to reconstruct it. Is that true? A person who has not promised that a Bill shall be reconstructed is free to reconstruct it, but is not bound to do so. I hope I have made a clear distinction; and I am glad to see that the laughter opposite has ceased as light has flowed in upon the minds of those hon. gentlemen. I was struck with another observation of the right hon. gentleman. He says that this Bill, whatever else may happen, will at any rate be rejected

by the votes of a majority of English and Scotch Members—[Opposition cheers]—and he is cheered by those who teach us that they are, above all things, anxious for the maintenance of an absolutely united kingdom, and an absolutely united Parliament, in which Irish members are in all respects to be assimilated to, and identical with, those representing English and Scotch constituencies. The right hon. gentleman talks about a dissolution, and I am glad to find that upon that point he and we are much more nearly associated in our views and expectations than upon almost any other point. After what the right hon. gentlemen has said, and the want of acquaintance which he has shown with the history of this Bill, on which he dwelt so long, and after what was said by my right hon. friend behind me,¹ I must again remind the House, at any rate, in the clearest terms I can use, of the exact position in which we stand with reference to the Bill. In the first place, I take it to be absolutely beyond dispute, on broad and high parliamentary grounds, that that which is voted upon to-night is the principle of the Bill as distinguished from the particulars of the Bill. What may be the principle of the Bill, I grant you freely I have no authority to determine. [A laugh.] The hon. member laughs; I am much obliged for his running commentary, which is not usual, on my observations, but it is our duty to give our own sense of the construction of the principle of the Bill, and I think I drew a confirmation of that construction from the speech of the right hon. gentleman, because he himself said this was a Bill for the purpose of establishing a legislative body in Ireland for the management of Irish affairs. Well, sir, that—if we have any power or any title to give our view on the subject—is the principle of the Bill. As respects the principle of the Bill, I apprehend it to be beyond all question that members voting for the principle of the Bill are in this sense entirely and absolutely free—that if they consider that there is another set of provisions by means of which better and fuller effect may be given to the principle of the Bill, they are at liberty to displace all the

¹ Mr Goschen.

particulars they find in it which hinder that better and fuller effect being given to the principle. [A laugh.] That does not admit of doubt. I am quite certain the hon. member who laughs will not rise in his place at any time and say that a member is not at liberty to remove each and all, if he thinks fit, of the particulars of the Bill, if in good faith he believes that the principle of the Bill can be better and more adequately promoted by a different set of provisions. But the Government have taken certain engagements. They have taken an engagement as to taxation for the intervention of Irish members, to the terms of which I need not refer. They have also taken an engagement on the claim of Ireland to a continued concern through her members in the treatment of Imperial subjects generally. And that has entailed a positive pledge to reconstruct the 24th clause, and to adopt certain consequential amendments connected with it. One more question has been raised, and has excited a deep interest—and that is with respect to other Amendments to the Bill. Of course as to the freedom of hon. members to suggest other amendments, I have spoken in terms which, I think, are abundantly large. As respects our duty, there can be no question at all that our duty, if an interval is granted to us, and the circumstances of the present session require the withdrawal of the Bill, and it is to be re-introduced with Amendments at an early date in the autumn—of course it is our duty to amend our Bill with every real amendment and improvement, and with whatever is calculated to make it more effective and more acceptable for the attainment of its end. It is, as a matter of course, and without any specific assurance, our duty to consider all such Amendments. We are perfectly free to deal with them; but it would be the meanest and basest act on the part of the Government to pretend that they have a plan of reconstruction ready beforehand, cut and dry in their minds, at a time when, from the very nature of the case, it must be obvious that they can have no such thing. So much then for the situation, for the freedom of members to propose Amendments, for the duty of the Government to consider Amendments and improve their Bill, if they can.

with the view of a fuller and better application of the principle; but subject, let me add, to conditions—five in number—which have been clearly enumerated on a former occasion, and from which there is no intention on our part to recede. The right hon. gentleman speaks of Ulster as a question of principle. The question of Ulster, or whatever the common name of the question may be, may be one of great importance; but I must say that while I in no respect recede from the statement made in regard to it at the opening of these debates, yet I cannot see that any certain plan for Ulster has made any serious or effective progress.

The hon. and gallant gentleman the Member for North Armagh¹ emphatically disclaims the severance of Ulster from the rest of Ireland, and the hon. Member for Cork has laid before us a reasoned and elaborate argument on that subject to-day, which as it appears to me, requires the careful attention of those who propose such a plan for our acceptance. We retain, however, perfect freedom to judge the case upon its merits. Now, sir I want to say a word upon the subject of Irish loyalism, because we are obliged to use phrases in debates of this kind which cannot be explained from time to time when using them, and it is well that there should be a little understanding beforehand. When I hear the speeches of the hon. Member for South Belfast² and of some other gentlemen it always appears to me that he is under the pious conviction that loyalty is innate in the Irish Protestants, and disloyalty innate in—some other persons. I do believe that he is under the impression that at all times, in all the long generations of Irish history, that has been the distinction to be drawn between Protestants and persons who are not Protestants. Is Protestant loyalism a thing that has a date and origin, or is it not? Has the hon. Member, or the hon. and gallant Member for North Armagh, inquired what was the state of Ireland in the eighteenth century with respect to loyalty? As far as regarded the great mass of the population—the Roman Catholic population—they were hardly born into political life until the close of the century; and

¹ Major Saunderson.

² Mr Johnston.

for a long period, in the time of Dean Swift, who describes their incapacity for political action as something beyond belief, it would have been absurd to speak of them as loyal or disloyal. But at the close of the century the Protestants and Roman Catholics of Ireland were described in a short passage by Mr Burke, which I shall now read to the House. The date of it is 1797, and it is taken from a letter to Mr Windham. He speaks of the subject of disaffection. "It"—that is to say disaffection—

"has cast deep roots in the principles and habits of the majority amongst the lower and middle classes of the whole Protestant part of Ireland. The Catholics who are intermingled with them are more or less tainted. In the other parts of Ireland (some in Dublin only excepted) the Catholics, who are in a manner the whole people, are as yet sound; but they may be provoked, as all men easily may be, out of their principles."

What does that show? That the Protestants, not having grievances to complain of, have become loyal; but in many cases the Roman Catholics have been provoked, as Mr Burke says all men easily may be, out of their principles of loyalty. And these are words, and these are ideas, which show us what is the way in which to promote loyalty, and what is the way in which we can destroy it.

Another subject on which I shall dwell only for a moment is that of federation. Many gentlemen in this House are greatly enamoured of this idea, and the object they have in view is a noble object. I will not admit the justice of the disparagement cast by the right hon. gentlemen on the British Empire. I do not consider that this is a "loosely connected Empire." But I admit that, if means can be devised of establishing a more active connection with our distant Colonies, the idea is well worthy the attention of every loyal man. The idea of federation is a popular one. I will give no opinion upon it now; but I suspect that it is beset with more difficulties than have as yet been examined or brought to light. But this Bill, whatever be its rights or wrongs in any other respect, is unquestionably a step—an important step—in that direction. Federation rests essentially upon two things, and upon two things alone, as

preconditioned. One is the division of Legislature, and the other is the division of subjects, and both those divisions are among the vital objects of this Bill. The right hon. gentleman has referred to the question of supremacy. My own opinion is that this debate has, in a considerable degree, cleared the ground upon that subject. It is most satisfactory to me to hear the statements of the hon. Member for Cork.¹ I own I have heard some astounding doctrines—astounding to an ignorant layman—from learned lawyers; but still, upon the whole, the balance of authority seems to me to have established, as a clear and elementary proposition that cannot be denied that this Parliament, be it the Imperial Parliament or not, as long as it continues in its legal identity, is possessed now, as it was possessed before the Union and before the time of Grattan's Parliament, of a supremacy which is absolutely, and in the nature of things inalienable, which it could not part with if it would, and which it would not part with if it could. There is no doubt a practical question, because it is quite true that in constituting a legislature in Ireland we do what we did when we constituted a legislature for Canada and for Australia. We devolve an important portion of power—we did it in Canada, and I hope we shall do it in Ireland—and we devolve it with a view to not a partial, not a nominal, but a real and practical independent management of their own affairs. That is what the right hon. gentleman objects to doing. That is the thing which we desire and hope and mean to do. It is obvious that the question may be raised, How are you to deal with the possible cases where the Imperial Government, notwithstanding this general division of affairs, may be compelled by obligations of Imperial interest and honour to interfere? My answer is that this question has received a far better solution from practical politics, and from the experience of the last 40 or 50 years, than could ever have been given to it by the definition of lawyers, however eminent they may be. When the Legislature of Canada was founded this difficulty arose. We had the case of the Canadian Rebellion, where I myself, for one, was of

¹ Mr Parnell.

opinion, and Lord Brougham was also of opinion—I know not now whether rightly or wrongly—that the honour of the Crown had been invaded by the proposition to grant compensation for losses in the Rebellion to those who had been rebels, and who had incurred those losses as rebels. I say nothing now about our being right or wrong; but in 1849 Lord Brougham brought forward a motion on the subject in the House of Lords, and I myself did the same in the House of Commons. The important part was the declaration which was drawn from Ministers of the Crown. Lord John Russell then, in answer to me, laid down what I conceive to be a true and sound doctrine, in terms which, I think, may be described as classical and authoritative in their manner of dealing with this question. Lord Russell, speaking on the 14th of June 1849, said:—

“I entirely concur with the right hon. gentleman—and it is, indeed, in conformity with the sentiments I expressed in a despatch written, I think, some ten years ago—that there are cases which must be left to the decision of the responsible ministers of the Crown. There are cases where the honour of the Crown and the safety of this country are concerned, and in such cases it requires the utmost temper in the Colonies, and the utmost temper and firmness in this country, in order to prevent differences from being pushed to a collision which might be fatal to the connections between the mother country and the Colonies. I fully admit that there are such cases; but when the right hon. gentleman goes on to say that he considers the Earl of Elgin has received some instructions from the Government of this country by which he is debarred from asking the advice and direction of the Crown upon questions which affect Imperial policy and the national honour, he is totally mistaken in that unwarranted assumption.”¹

That passage, as I believe, contains, very justly and clearly set forth, the practical mode by which this question, difficult in the abstract, will be settled now as it has been settled before; and we shall find that as it has been perfectly easy to reconcile the rights of Canada with the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, it will not be less easy in practice to reconcile the rights and the autonomy of Ireland with the same supremacy.

I wish now to refer to another matter. I hear constantly used the terms Unionists and Separatists. But what I want to know is, Who are the Unionists? I want to know who are the Separatists? I see this Bill described in newspapers of great

¹ 3 Hansard [106], 225, 226.

circulation and elsewhere, as a Separation Bill. Several gentlemen opposite adopt and make that style of description their own. Speaking of that description, I say that it is the merest slang of vulgar controversy. Do you think this Bill will tend to separation? Well, your arguments, and even your prejudices, are worthy of all consideration and respect; but is it a fair and rational mode of conducting a controversy to attach these hard names to measures on which you wish to argue, and on which I suppose you desire to convince by argument? Let me illustrate. I go back to the Reform Act of Lord Grey. When that Reform Bill was introduced, it was conscientiously and honestly believed by great masses of men, and intelligent men too, that the Bill absolutely involved the destruction of the Monarchy. The Duke of Wellington propounded a doctrine very much to this effect; but I do not think that any of those gentlemen, nor the newspapers that supported them, ever descended so low in their choice of weapons as to call the measure "The Monarchy Destruction Bill." Such language is a mere begging of the question. Now, I must make a large demand on your patience and your indulgence—we conscientiously believe that there are Unionists and Disunionists; but that it is our policy that leads to union and yours to separation. This involves a very large and deep historical question. Let us try for a few moments to look at it historically. The arguments used on the other side of the House appear to me to rest in principle and in the main upon one of two suppositions. One of them, which I will not now discuss, is the profound incompetency of the Irish people; but there is another, and it is this. It is, I believe, the conscientious conviction of the hon. gentlemen opposite, that when two or more countries, associated but not incorporated together, are in disturbed relations with each other, the remedy is to create an absolute legislative incorporation. On the other hand, they believe that the dissolution of such an incorporation is clearly the mode to bring about the dissolution of the political relations of those countries. I do not deny that there may be cases in which legislative incorporation may

have been the means of constituting a great country, as in the case of France. But we believe, as proved by history, that where there are those disturbed relations between countries associated, but not incorporated, the true principle is to make ample provision for local independence, subject to Imperial unity. These are propositions of the greatest interest and importance. Gentlemen speak of tightening the ties between England and Ireland as if tightening the ties were always the means to be adopted. Tightening the tie is frequently the means of making it burst, whilst relaxing the tie is very frequently the way to provide for its durability, and enable it to stand a stronger strain; so that it is true, as was said by the hon. Member for Newcastle, that the separation of Legislatures is often the union of countries, and the union of Legislatures is often the severance of countries. Can you give me a single instance from all your historical inquiries where the acknowledgment of local independence has been followed by the severance of countries? [Cries of "Turkey!" "Servia!"] I was just going to refer to those countries, and to make the admission—that what I have said does not apply where a third Power has intervened, and has given liberty, in defiance of the Sovereign Power, to the subject State. But do you propose to wait until some third Power shall intervene in the case of Ireland, as it intervened in the case of America? [An hon. member: We are not afraid] I never asked the hon. gentleman whether he was afraid. It does not matter much whether he is afraid or not; but I would inculcate in him that early and provident fear which, in the language of Mr Burke, is the mother of safety. I admit that where some third Power interferes, as France interfered in the case of America, you can expect nothing to result but severance, with hostile feeling on both sides. But I am not speaking of such cases. That is not the case before us. But I ask you to give me a single instance where, apart from the intervention of a third Power, the independence of the Legislatures was followed by the severance of the nations. I can give several instances where total severance of countries has been the consequence of an

attempt to tighten the bond—in the case of England and America, in the case of Belgium and Holland. The attempt to make Belgians conform to the ways and ideas and institutions of Holland led to the severance of the two countries. In the case of Denmark and the Duchies, they long attempted to do what, perhaps, gentlemen would wish much to do in Ireland—namely, to force Danish institutions and ideas on the Duchies. Those long attempts ended, as we all know, together with the insufficient acknowledgment of the ancient institutions of those Duchies, in the total loss of those Duchies to Denmark, and their incorporation in another political connection. But let us not look simply to the negative side. Where local independence has been acknowledged and legislative severance has been given, there, in a number of cases, it has been made practicable to hold countries together that otherwise could not have been held together, and the difficulties which existed either have been lessened or altogether removed. The world is full of such cases. [An hon. member: “Turkey.”] An hon. gentleman imprudently interrupted me by calling out “Turkey.” I am going to tell him that in Turkey, with its imperfect organisation, in cases where there has not been violent interference, where the matter has not been driven to a point to provoke armed interference by a foreign power, local autonomy has been tried, and tried with the best effect. In the island of Crete, which twenty years ago appeared to be almost lost to Turkey, loosening the ties to Constantinople has immensely improved the relations between the Sultan and that island. [Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—Chronic Revolution.] Chronic Revolution! What are the tests of chronic revolution? Has it paid its tribute? Has it called for the armed force of Turkey to put down revolt? Then I will take another case, the case of the Lebanon. That was the subject of international arrangement 23 or 24 years ago. The Lebanon was in chronic revolution, and was under the absolute sway of Constantinople. The Lebanon was placed under a system of practical local independence, and from that day to this it has never been a trouble to Turkey. In a case more remarkable, the case of

the island of Samos, which has enjoyed for a length of time, I believe, a complete autonomy, and in which, singular as it may seem, it has never been possible to create disorder, a real attachment to the Turkish Empire, or, at any rate, a contentment with the political tie, subsists and holds that country in tranquillity, so that even Turkey bears testimony to the principle of which I speak. There are numbers of other cases. The case of Norway and Sweden is most remarkable, because of these two countries the stronger and more populous can hardly hope to have power to coerce the weaker—two countries completely separate, having absolutely no connection of legislative or executive government, and united together recently—only 60 years ago. That union has been found practicable, and practicable only, by means of granting a just autonomy and independence. Take the case of Denmark and Iceland. [Laughter.] Laughter is, with hon. gentlemen opposite, a very common weapon now, and it is very difficult for me to contend with it at this period of my life. Perhaps 20, 30, or 40 years ago I could have defended myself against it with more ease. It has been said that the Parliament of Iceland has been dissolved, and that there have been difficulties. Well, there have been difficulties between the Parliament of Iceland and the Crown of Denmark. The Crown of Denmark is, unhappily, in difficulties with the legislative body of Denmark, but between the legislative body of Denmark and the legislative body of Iceland there have been, I believe, no difficulties. When my hon. friend the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,¹ in his admirable speech, quoted the case of Iceland, hon. gentlemen opposite, with their usual method of rebuke, laughed; and some one, endeavouring to dignify, adorn, and decorate that laughter with an idea, called out, "Distance; Iceland is so distant." Well, if it is so distant, I apprehend that that makes it a great deal more difficult for Denmark to hold her down by force, and therefore more necessary for her to choose the methods which are most likely to secure contentment and tranquillity. But if you object to the case of Iceland on

¹ Mr Bryce.

account of distance, what do you say to the case of Finland? Is that country distant from Russia? Are you aware that the social and political difficulties, which have so often threatened the peace of Russia, and which were fatal not many years ago to the life of one of the best and worthiest of her sovereigns, have no place in Finland? Why? Because Finland has perfect legislative autonomy, the management of her own affairs, the preservation of her own institutions. That state of things has given contentment to Finland, and might be envied by many better known and more famous parts of the world. But the case of Austria is, perhaps, the most remarkable of all. I will not refer now to Austria and Hungary further than to say that I believe my right hon. friend the Member for East Edinburgh¹ is entirely wrong, for all practical purposes, in what he said as to the mixture of Executive Governments as far as local affairs are concerned. As far as joint affairs are concerned, it is a different matter; but there is a perfect independence between Austria and Hungary so far as local affairs are concerned. The case there, I should state, was surrounded with difficulties infinitely transcending any before us. But it is not Austria and Hungary alone. It is not too much to say of Austria that that great Empire, with the multitude of States of which it is composed, is held together by local autonomy and nothing else, and that the man who should attempt to banish local autonomy from Austria, and to gather together the representatives of her States in Vienna to deal with the local affairs of the provinces, would seal the death-warrant of the Empire. Long may she flourish, as having based herself upon so just and so enlightened a principle. The most striking instance in the wide circuit of her empire is Galicia. Galicia is inhabited by Poles. Austria has one of the fragments of that unhappy and dissevered country under her charge. Well, I need not speak of Russia and Poland, while even in Prussia the relations of Prussian Poland are, at this moment, the subject of the most serious difficulty. There are no difficulties between Galicia and Austria. Why? Because Austria has

¹ Mr Goschen.

treated Galicia upon the principle of placing trust and confidence in her, and has invested her with full practical power over the management of her own affairs. Now, I do not think that I have thrown out any unfair challenges. I have asked for instances from the other side, in which the granting of Home Rule has been attended with evil consequences, but none have been given—whereas I have given a multitude of instances in support of my proposition, which is that the severance which we propose to make for local purposes between the Irish legislative body and Parliament meeting in these walls, is not a mode of disunion, but is a mode of closer union, and is not a mode of separation, but is a mode preventing separation.

Before I leave this point, I must refer to the case of Canada, because it is so remarkable, and because, notwithstanding the multitude of circumstantial differences between Canada and Great Britain, yet still the resemblances in principle are so profound and so significant. My right hon. friend, the Member for West Birmingham,¹ said, as I understood him the other day, that he had been investigating the case of Canada. I own I thought I knew something about it, because in the early years of my Parliamentary life I took great interest in it, and some part in the great discussions on the disposal of Canada some fifty years ago. My reading of the history of Canada sustains my original propositions. My right hon. friend announced to the House that he had found that the Legislative Councils in Canada had been established for the purpose of protecting the minority. Where did he find that? I read not long ago the very lengthened and detailed debates in Parliament on the subject of the establishment of those Legislative Councils, and from the beginning to the end of those debates, while the character of the legislative councils was abundantly discussed, there is not a word about their being appointed for the protection of minorities. But I will not rest the case of Canada upon that ground. What does the case of Canada show? It shows two things—first, that between 1830 and 1840 there were most formidable

¹ Mr Chamberlain.

differences between Great Britain and Canada, and that those differences were completely cured and healed by the establishment of a responsible Government with a free executive—that is to say, that those differences were absolutely cured by the very remedy which we now propose to apply in the case of Ireland. But, as I have shown, supremacy was not relinquished, it remained as was stated in the citation from Lord Russell. But after that, what happened? The two provinces changed most fundamentally in their relative importance, and the stereotyped arrangements of the union of 1840 were found to be totally inadequate to deal with the altered conditions of the provinces among themselves. Recollect that these provinces were united provinces, with one legislature. Discord arose between them. What was the mode adopted of curing that discord? The mode which we now propose of the severance of the legislatures—the establishment of an extended union under which, at this moment, with the multiplied legislatures of those provinces, a substantial and perfect political harmony exists. I can understand, then, the disinclination which hon. gentlemen opposite have to go into history as to these cases, but it will be unfolded more and more as these debates proceed, if the controversy be prolonged—it will more and more appear how strong is the foundation upon which we stand now, and upon which Mr Grattan stood over 86 years ago, when he contended that a union of the legislatures was the way to a moral and a real separation between the two countries.

It has been asked in this debate, Why have we put aside all the other business of Parliament, and why have we thrown the country into all this agitation for the sake of the Irish question? ["Hear, hear!"] That cheer is the echo that I wanted. Well, sir, the first reason is this—because in Ireland the primary purposes of Government are not attained. What said the hon. Member for Newcastle in his eloquent speech? That in a considerable part of Ireland distress was chronic, disaffection was perpetual, and insurrection was smouldering. What is implied by those who speak of the dreadful murder that lately took place in Kerry? And I must quote

the Belfast outrage along with it—not as being precisely of the same character, but as a significant proof of the weakness of the tie which binds the people to the law. Sir, it is that you have not got that respect for the law, that sympathy with the law on the part of the people, without which real civilisation cannot exist. That is our first reason. I will not go back at this time on the dreadful story of the Union; but that, too, must be unfolded in all its hideous features if this controversy is to be prolonged—that Union of which I ought to say that, without qualifying in the least any epithet I have used, I do not believe that that Union can or ought to be repealed, for it has made marks upon history that cannot be effaced. But I go on to another pious belief which prevails on the other side of the House, or which is often professed in controversies on the Irish Question. It is supposed that all the abuses of English power in Ireland relate to a remote period of history, and that from the year 1800 onwards, from the time of the Union, there has been a period of steady redress of grievances. Sir, I am sorry to say there has been nothing of the kind. There has been a period when grievances have been redressed under compulsion, as in 1829, when Catholic Emancipation was granted to avoid civil war. There have been grievances, mixed up with the most terrible evidence of the general failure of Government, as was exhibited by the Devon Commission in the year 1843. On a former night I made a quotation from the Report which spoke of the labourer. Now I have a corresponding quotation, which is more important, and which speaks of the cottier. What was the proportion of the population which, more than forty years after the Union, was described by the Devon Report as being in a condition worse and more disgraceful than any population in Europe? Mr O'Connell has estimated it in this House at 5,000,000 out of 7,000,000; and Sir James Graham, in debate with him, declined to admit that it was 5,000,000, but did admit that it was 3,500,000. Well, sir, in 1816 Parliament passed an Act¹ of Irish legislation. What was the purpose of that Act? The Act declared that, from the state of the law in

¹ The Ejectment Act, 56 George III. cap. 88.

Ireland, the old intertangled usages, which had replaced in an imperfect manner tribal usages on which the tenure of land in Ireland was founded—Parliament swept them away, and did everything to expose the tenant to the action of the landlord, but nothing to relieve or to deal with, by any amendment of the law, the terrible distress which was finally disclosed by the Devon Commission. Again, what was the state of Ireland with regard to freedom? In the year 1820 the Sheriff of Dublin and the other gentry of that county and capital determined to have a county meeting to make compliments to George IV—the trial of Queen Caroline being just over. They held their county meeting, the people went to the county meeting, and a counter address was moved, warm in professions of loyalty, but setting out the grievances of the country, and condemning the trial and proceedings against the Queen. The Sheriff refused to hear it. He put his own motion, but refused to put the other motion; he left the meeting, which continued the debate, and he sent in the military to the meeting, which was broken up by force. That was the state of Ireland as to freedom of petition and remonstrance twenty years after the Union. Do you suppose that would have been the case if Ireland had retained her own Parliament? No, sir.

Other cases I will not dwell upon at this late hour, simply on account of the lateness of the hour. From 1849, when we passed an Act¹ which enabled the landlords of Ireland to sell improvements on their tenants' holdings over their heads, down to 1880, when a most limited and carefully framed Bill,² the product of Mr Forster's³ benevolence, was passed by this House, and rejected by an enormous majority in the House of Lords, thereby precipitating the Land Act of 1881, it is impossible to stand by the legislation of this House as a whole since the Union. I have sometimes heard it said, You have had all kinds of remedial legislation. The two chief items are the Disestablishment of the Church and the

¹ The Encumbered Estates (Ireland) Act.

² The Relief of Distress (Ireland) Bill, containing a "compensation for disturbance" Clause.

³ Then Chief Secretary for Ireland.

reform of the Land Laws. But what did you say of these? Why, you said the change in the Land Laws was confiscation, and the disestablishment of the Church was sacrilege. You cannot at one and the same time condemn these measures as confiscation and sacrilege, and at the same time quote them as proofs of the justice with which you have acted to Ireland. I must further say that we have proposed this measure because Ireland wants to make her own laws. It is not enough to say that you are prepared to make good laws. You were prepared to make good laws for the Colonies. You did make good laws for the Colonies, according to the best of your light. The colonists were totally dissatisfied with them. You accepted their claim to make their own laws. Ireland, in our opinion, has a claim not less urgent.

Now, sir, what is before us? What is before us in the event of the rejection of this Bill? What alternatives have been proposed? There I must for a moment comment on the fertile imagination of my right hon. friend, the Member for West Birmingham. He has proposed alternatives, and plenty of them. My right hon. friend says that a dissolution has no terrors for him. I do not wonder at it. I do not see how a dissolution can have any terrors for him. He has trimmed his vessel and he has touched his rudder in such a masterly way, that in whichever direction the winds of heaven may blow they must fill his sails. Let me illustrate my meaning. I will suppose different cases. Supposing at the election—I mean that an election is a thing like Christmas, it is always coming—suppose that at an election public opinion should be very strong in favour of the Bill. My right hon. friend would then be perfectly prepared to meet that public opinion, and tell it—"I declared strongly that I adopted the principle of the Bill." On the other hand, if public opinion was very adverse to the Bill, my right hon. friend again is in complete armour, because he says—"Yes, I voted against the Bill." Supposing, again, public opinion is in favour of a very large plan for Ireland, my right hon. friend is perfectly provided for that case also. The Government plan was not large enough for him, and he proposed in his speech on

the introduction of the Bill that we should have a measure on the basis of federation, which goes beyond this Bill. Lastly, —and now I have very nearly boxed the compass—supposing that public opinion should take quite a different turn, and, instead of wanting very large measures for Ireland, should demand very small measures for Ireland, still the resources of my hon. friend are not exhausted, because then he is able to point out that the last of his plans was four Provincial Councils controlled from London. Under other circumstances I should perhaps have been tempted to ask the secret of my right hon. friend's recipe; as it is, I am afraid I am too old to learn it. But I do not wonder that a dissolution has no terrors for him, because he is prepared in such a way and with such a series of expedients to meet all the possible contingencies of the case.

Well, sir, when I come to look at these practical alternatives and provisions, I find that they are visibly creations of the vivid imagination, born of the hour, and perishing with the hour, totally and absolutely unavailable for the solution of a great and difficult problem, the weight of which and the urgency of which my right hon. friend himself in other days has seemed to feel. But I should not say now that our plan has possession of the field without a rival. Lord Salisbury has given us a rival plan. My first remark is that Lord Salisbury's policy has not been disavowed. It is therefore adopted. What is it? [A laugh.] Another laugh? It has not been disavowed; what is it? Great complaints are made because it has been called a policy of coercion, and Lord Salisbury is stated to have explained in "another place" that he is not favourable to coercion, but only to legislative provisions for preventing interference by one man with the liberty of another, and for insuring the regular execution of the law. And that, you say, is not coercion? Was that your view six months ago? What did the Liberal Government propose when they went out of office? They proposed to enact clauses against the— [Cries of "No, No," from the Opposition.] [Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL—They never made any proposal.] Perhaps not; but it was publicly stated. It was stated by me in a

letter to the right hon. gentleman. [Sir MICHAEL HICKS-BEACH—In October.] Certainly; but it was stated in order to correct a rather gross error of the right hon. gentleman. It was stated as what we had intended when we were going out of office; unless I am greatly mistaken, it was publicly stated in this House long before. However, it is not very important. What were the proposals that we were about to make, or that we were supposed to be about to make? Well, a proposal about "Boycotting"—to prevent one man interfering with the liberty of another; and a proposal about a change of venue to insure the execution of the ordinary law. And how were these proposals viewed? Did not the Tories go to the elections putting upon their placards, "Vote for the Tories, and no Coercion"? [Sir WALTER B. BARTELOT¹—No, No!] I do not say that every Tory did it. The hon. and gallant Baronet cries "No." No doubt he did not do it: but he had no Irish voters. [Sir W. B. BARTELOT—If I had I would have done it.] Then it means this—that these proposals which we were about to make were defined as coercion by the Tories at the election, and Lord Salisbury now denies them to be coercion; and it is resented with the loudest manifestations of displeasure when any one on this side of the House states that Lord Salisbury has recommended 20 years of coercion. Lord Salisbury recommended, as he says himself, 20 years of those measures which last year were denounced by the Tories. But what did Lord Salisbury call them himself? What were his own words? His words were²—"My alternative policy is that Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland." What is the meaning of those words? Their meaning, in the first instance, is this: The Government does not want the aid of Parliament to exercise their executive power; it wants the aid of Parliament for fresh legislation. The demand that the Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland is a demand for fresh legislative power. This fresh legislative

¹ Member for North-West Sussex.

² St James's Hall, May 15, 1886.

power, how are they to use? "Apply that recipe honestly, consistently, and resolutely for 20 years, and at the end of that time you will find Ireland will be fit to accept any gift in the way of Local Government or repeal of Coercion Laws that you may wish to give." And yet objections and complaints of misrepresentations teem from that side of the House when any one on this side says that Lord Salisbury recommended coercion, when he himself applies that same term in his own words.

A question was put to me by my hon. friend the Member for Bermondsey,¹ in the course of his most instructive speech. My hon. friend had a serious misgiving as to the point of time. Were we right in introducing this measure now? He did not object to the principle; he intimated a doubt as to the moment. I may ask my hon. friend to consider what would have happened had we hesitated as to the duty before us, had we used the constant efforts that would have been necessary to keep the late Government in office, and allowed them to persevere in their intentions. On the 26th of January they proposed what we termed a measure of coercion, and I think we were justified in so terming it, because anything attempting to put down a political association can hardly have another name. Can it be denied that that legislation must have been accompanied by legislation against the Press, legislation against public meetings, and other legislation without which it would have been totally ineffective? Would it have been better, if a great controversy cannot be avoided—and I am sensible of the evil of this great controversy—I say it is better that parties should be matched in conflict upon a question of giving a great boon to Ireland, rather than—as we should have been if the policy of January 26 had proceeded—that we should have been matched and brought into conflict, and the whole country torn with dispute and discussion upon the policy of a great measure of coercion. That is my first reason. My second reason is this. Let my hon. friend recollect that this is the earliest moment in our Parliamentary history when we have the voice of Ireland authentically expressed in our hearing. Majorities of Home Rulers there may have been

¹ Mr Thorold Rogers.

upon other occasions ; a practical majority of Irish members never has been brought together for such a purpose. Now, first, we can understand her ; we are able to learn authentically what she wants and wishes, what she offers and will do ; and as we ourselves enter into the strongest moral and honourable obligations by the steps which we have taken in this House, so we have before us practically an Ireland under the representative system, able to give us equally authentic information, able morally to convey to us an assurance, the breach and rupture of which would cover Ireland with disgrace. There is another reason, but not a very important one. It is this—I feel that any attempt to palter with the demands of Ireland so conveyed in forms known to the Constitution, and any rejection of the conciliatory policy might have an effect that none of us could wish in strengthening that party of disorder which is behind the back of the Irish representatives, which skulks in America, which skulks in Ireland, which, I trust, is losing ground and is losing force, and will lose ground and will lose force in proportion as our policy is carried out, and which I cannot altogether dismiss from consideration when I take into view the consequences that might follow upon its rejection. What is the case of Ireland at this moment? Have hon. gentlemen considered that they are coming into conflict with a nation? Can anything stop a nation's demand, except its being proved to be immoderate and unsafe? But here are multitudes, and I believe millions upon millions, out of doors, who feel this demand to be neither immoderate nor unsafe. In our opinion there is but one question before us about this demand. It is as to the time and circumstance of granting it. There is no question in our minds that it will be granted. We wish it to be granted in the mode prescribed by Mr Burke. Mr Burke said, in his first speech at Bristol:—

* “I was true to my old-standing invariable principle, that all things which came from Great Britain should issue as a gift of her bounty and beneficence rather than as claims recovered against struggling litigants, or at least, if your beneficence obtained no credit in your concessions, yet that they should appear the salutary provisions of your wisdom and foresight—not as things wrung from you with your blood by the cruel grip of a rigid necessity.”

The difference between giving with freedom and dignity on the one side, with acknowledgment and gratitude on the other, and giving under compulsion—giving with disgrace, giving with resentment dogging you at every step of your path—this difference is, in our eyes, fundamental, and this is the main reason, not only why we have acted, but why we have acted now. This, if I understand it, is one of the golden moments of our history—one of those opportunities which may come and may go, but which rarely return, or, if they return, return at long intervals, and under circumstances which no man can forecast. There have been such golden moments even in the tragic history of Ireland, as her poet says:—

“One time the harp of Innesfail
Was tuned to notes of gladness.”

And then he goes on to say:—

“But yet did oftener tell a tale
Of more prevailing sadness.”

But there was such a golden moment—it was in 1795—it was on the mission of Lord Fitzwilliam. At that moment it is historically clear that the Parliament of Grattan was on the point of solving the Irish problem. The two great knots of that problem were, in the first place, Roman Catholic Emancipation; and in the second place, the Reform of Parliament. The cup was at her lips, and she was ready to drink it, when the hand of England rudely and ruthlessly dashed it to the ground, in obedience to the wild and dangerous intimations of an Irish faction—

“Ex illo fluere ac retro sublapsa referri,
Spes Danaum.”¹

There has been no great day of hope for Ireland, no day when you might hope completely and definitely to end the controversy till now—more than 90 years. The long periodic time has at last run out, and the star has again mounted into the heavens. What Ireland was doing for herself in 1795 we at length have done. The Roman Catholics have

¹ Verg. *Æn.* ii. 169.

been emancipated—emancipated after a woeful disregard of solemn promises through 29 years, emancipated slowly, sullenly, not from goodwill, but from abject terror, with all the fruits and consequences which will always follow that method of legislation. The second problem has been also solved, and the representation of Ireland has been thoroughly reformed; and I am thankful to say that the franchise was given to Ireland on the re-adjustment of last year with a free heart, with an open hand, and the gift of that franchise was the last act required to make the success of Ireland in her final effort absolutely sure. We have given Ireland a voice; we must all listen for a moment to what she says. We must all listen, both sides, both parties—I mean as they are divided on this question—divided, I am afraid, by an almost immeasurable gap. We do not undervalue or despise the forces opposed to us. I have described them as the forces of class and its dependants; and that as a general description—as a slight and rude outline of a description—is, I believe, perfectly true. I do not deny that many are against us whom we should have expected to be for us. I do not deny that some whom we see against us have caused us by their conscientious action the bitterest disappointment. You have power, you have wealth, you have rank, you have station, you have organisation. What have we? We think that we have the people's heart; we believe and we know we have the promise of the harvest of the future. As to the people's heart, you may dispute it, and dispute it with perfect sincerity. Let that matter make its own proof. As to the harvest of the future, I doubt if you have so much confidence, and I believe that there is in the breast of many a man who means to vote against us to-night a profound misgiving, approaching even to a deep conviction, that the end will be as we foresee, and not as you do—that the ebbing tide is with you, and the flowing tide is with us. Ireland stands at your bar, expectant, hopeful, almost suppliant. Her words are the words of truth and soberness. She asks a blessed oblivion of the past, and in that oblivion our interest is deeper than even hers. My right hon

friend, the Member for East Edinburgh, asks us to-night to abide by the traditions of which we are the heirs. What traditions? By the Irish traditions? Go into the length and breadth of the world, ransack the literature of all countries, find, if you can, a single voice, a single book—find, I would almost say, as much as a single newspaper article, unless the product of the day, in which the conduct of England towards Ireland is anywhere treated except with profound and bitter condemnation. Are these the traditions by which we are exhorted to stand? No; they are a sad exception to the glory of our country. They are a broad and black blot upon the pages of its history; and what we want to do is to stand by the traditions of which we are the heirs in all matters except our relations with Ireland, and to make our relations with Ireland to conform to the other traditions of our country. So we treat our traditions—so we hail the demand of Ireland for what I call a blessed oblivion of the past. She asks also a boon for the future; and that boon for the future, unless we are much mistaken, will be a boon to us in respect of honour, no less than a boon to her in respect of happiness, prosperity, and peace. Such, sir, is her prayer. Think, I beseech you, think well, think wisely, think, not for the moment, but for the years that are to come, before you reject this Bill.

HOME RULE AND ITS ALTERNATIVES.

Upon the defeat of the "Home Rule" Bill, Parliament was dissolved. Mr Gladstone stood again for Midlothian at the General Election, and spoke in Edinburgh on June 18th and 21st, and in Glasgow on the 22nd. He was returned unopposed. On the first occasion Mr Cowan, a prominent local Liberal, presided.

EDINBURGH, FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1886.

MR COWAN AND ELECTORS OF MIDLOTHIAN,—It was said after the battle of Inkerman by Mr Sidney Herbert during the Crimean War, that the battle of Inkerman was the soldiers' battle. It was not won by the tactics or by the ability of the generals, but by the valour and determination of the soldiers. You may anticipate that I mean to say to you that the present dissolution is the people's dissolution, and the present election is the people's election. We have to lament, gentlemen, here and elsewhere, the absence of some¹ who might perhaps have been upon this platform, who might have been with us as in former battles, instead of being against us, which they were on Monday, the 7th of this month.² The question is whether the determination of the country, whether its strong sense of justice and of sympathy with our fellow-subjects in Ireland, will make up for this defection, and for my part, gentlemen, I have perceived signs ever since this question came to the front which inspire me with a strong conviction that the determination of the people will carry it through in spite of the defection of the chiefs. I have lived, gentlemen, through many periods of political

¹ There had been a secession of Liberals on the Irish Question, who called themselves Liberal Unionists.

² When the Home Rule Bill was rejected.

interest and excitement: I have seen much manifestations, fervour, and enthusiasm, but never did I know interest so profound, never did I know enthusiasm so abundantly poured forth as it has been since the great question of our relations with Ireland has come forward to be determined; and the signs of yesterday,¹ when departing from the great metropolis of the south, I reached the metropolis of the north, would have been enough to convince the most incredulous. I had heard, gentlemen, and I had read in London, that Scotland was doubtful or adverse upon this question. My answer was, I did not believe it. My hope was that I might have an opportunity in some degree of putting it to the proof; and I saw enough, in the course of my progress of yesterday, to show me that the heart of Scotland never was more deeply and profoundly touched, and the will of Scotland never more earnestly bent upon a work of policy and justice than it is upon the accomplishment of the great enterprise which we have now in hand. Now, gentlemen, I have referred to that sad and painful subject, the absence of some among our friends, who we wished could have been here, but who are acting under the dictates of their own consciences, with the same claim to credit for honourable mention that we might ask for ourselves, and with that claim freely accorded to them. Yet, notwithstanding, we cannot overlook the fact that the vote was carried against us by the officers—a portion of the officers—of our own army. The Conservative and Tory party have been well content to leave the work in their hands, and in the performance of that work they have, I must say, shown a portentous and superhuman zeal. Gentlemen, these I venture to call the Liberal seceders. But I will not now discuss the particularities of their position. Unfortunately we can't agree at all about even the terms we use in this controversy. They call themselves Unionists and they call us disintegrators, whereas that union upon paper which it is that they wish to preserve without alteration—that union upon paper, it has mainly been, which has destroyed the real union, the union of the heart and

¹ Upon leaving London, and at many points in his journey to the north, Mr Gladstone had met with an enthusiastic reception.

mind. And while we feel that the union upon paper ought to be respected in so far as it is innocent, and especially to be conserved in so far as it is valuable,—it is that union of heart and mind which we seek, and which we are struggling to restore.

Well, now, gentlemen, I have said that this is the people's election. Let me in one point express my concurrence with my noble friend Lord Hartington,¹ who hopes that by a great majority the electors may pronounce against the claims of Ireland. 'My concurrence, gentlemen, is not upon the point of opposition to the claims of Ireland; but it is upon the point of the great majority. Rely upon it, it is desirable that this great controversy should be brought speedily to a close. I will give, as opportunity offers, the reasons—the convincing reasons—which make that so highly requisite for every interest of this country, that nothing in my opinion can be more clear than that the position of all parties will be deplorable, that public business will be interrupted, public confidence will be shaken, social order in Ireland will not be restored, unless the people to whom the appeal is now made, and whose right to decide it is on all hands recognised, shall speak out with a clearness, with a manfulness, and with a decisiveness such as the question requires. Don't let it be said of this great nation that it is unequal to deal with it. Some have flinched from the difficulty, some have turned their backs in the day of trial, but let not that be the case of the nation. Let the nation speak clearly and decisively; and, gentlemen, rely upon it, if that voice be given, as we hope it may be given, in defence of the cause that we are now advocating, then, when that cause shall have been settled, and excitement attending the contest shall have passed by, it will be just like the old questions of religious disability, of Parliamentary reform, of freedom of trade, the people will wonder why there was this opposition, and even, as happened before—as before they really forgot that they had opposed, for instance, the repeal of the Corn Laws and the removal of religious disabilities, so they will now forget, should the question be appealed and

¹ Leader of the seceding Liberals, afterwards Duke of Devonshire.

decided in a right sense, that they ever were the opponents of the change which we are now striving to bring about.

Well, gentlemen, it is a little curious to look back—if I may carry you back for seven or eight months—seven months—to the period of last November—it is a little curious to look back upon the circumstances that placed us in our present position. Strangely enough, it has happened that the Irish claims have been defeated entirely through Irish agency. What happened, gentlemen, in the last election? You returned the Liberal party to Parliament with a majority of 85 over the Conservative party; but the Conservative party, possessed of 250 seats, owed 40 of these seats to the direct action of Mr Parnell¹ and his friends. I am not going to treat that as a matter of praise or blame at the present moment; I am only referring to it as a matter of fact. Suppose, gentlemen, that 40 had been deducted from the number of our opponents in the division of the 7th June, that would have made the number 301 instead of 341; and suppose 40 had been added to our 311, that would have made us 351 instead of 311. So far as England and Scotland were concerned, but for that singular agency of the Irish party and the Irish vote, it seems absolutely beyond dispute that the action of English votes and of Scottish votes at the General Election in November would have returned us in a force amply sufficient to carry the Bill through Parliament, and to have saved you the trouble of the present appeal. Well, gentlemen, I must own that the exertions made by Scotland in the last election were great exertions. I rejoice to look back upon them. I cannot say that I am not in some degree disappointed with the results, inasmuch as the Scottish members have yielded a larger proportional contingent to the ranks of the seceding Liberals than the English, and a far larger one than the Welsh members. But I look to Scotland, gentlemen, to set all that right. She understands her own affairs, and if she is convinced, as I believe she is, and I am confident that she will be convinced, that we are advocating the cause of justice

¹ The leader of the Irish Nationalists.

and of policy, then most certainly she will know how to provide that her voice shall not be misrepresented in Parliament.

Now, gentlemen, as I have come down to you for the purpose of a General Election, it is natural that I should endeavour, in a manner most convenient to you, to go through the various topics—at least the various topics that are connected with the issue now submitted to you. As regards general policy, the time has been so short since I had the honour of addressing you on a number of questions of public interest, that I may well refer to the declarations of last winter¹ as setting forth the present creed. Perhaps there are one or two points which it may be requisite to mention. Only one I will mention now, and it is this—I only name it in passing. There was an understanding established at the last election, as I believed, that the question of the Church in Scotland was to be maintained in a description of neutrality—not binding individual liberty undoubtedly, but at the same time that there was to be no great and systematic movement upon the subject. I must say that I do not know how to reconcile with that understanding the introduction of the bill of Mr Finlay.² The bill of Mr Finlay was an attempt essentially and fundamentally to alter the relations between the great Presbyterian bodies in Scotland; and I cannot express any regret, but, on the contrary, I incline to feel decided satisfaction that that bill did not receive the approval of the House of Commons. However, gentlemen, I only mention that because it may be considered as an exceptional circumstance, which has a little varied the features of the scene in regard to general politics since I had the honour of last addressing you.

But I will venture to express also my satisfaction on another point deeply interesting to Scotland. It is gratifying to me to think that even within this short period, and amidst the great pressure of the Irish question, it has been found practicable to admit of the legislative settlement³ of that difficult subject relat-

¹ There had been a General Election in the preceding November and December.

² Member for Inverness. He introduced the Church of Scotland Bill, which failed to get a Second Reading (March 17).

³ The Scotch Crofters Act, 1886.

ing to the crofters of the Highlands, a settlement which, I believe, commands—not perhaps satisfies every extreme desire, but commands the decided approval of the moderate and right-thinking mass of the people of Scotland.

Gentlemen, I must devote my speech to Ireland—the Irish question. It is, as you know, upon Ireland that Parliament has been dissolved; and with regard to the Irish question itself, there is far more to be said than I can possibly lay before you this evening. The Irish question has a special aspect as well as a general aspect. It has a special aspect intimately concerning the feelings of Scotland, and the history of Scotland, and the circumstances of Scotland: but, gentlemen, addressing, as I do, not you only, but the electors of the country in general—for, through the machinery of the press, such is the character now given to every local address—I think it my duty not to enter to-night—especially as I may have an opportunity two or three days hence—not to enter to-night upon the consideration of the specifically Scottish aspect of this subject, but to touch upon its general aspect; because, gentlemen, there is a question to be answered which it is of vital importance that the electors should have clearly and beyond all dispute before them. What is the true issue which they are called upon to decide? Now that is a matter which is much disputed, and I shall have to put two questions. Is it, in the first place, a choice between opposite policies in respect to Ireland, between opposite principles of action, or is it a choice to be made upon the particulars of a large and complicated Bill? Well now, gentlemen, I should not have thought of discussing such a question if it had not been the fact that very important organs of opinion have been addressing themselves to the purpose of showing that you, the electors of Scotland, are not to consider the policy that is to be pursued, but are to entangle yourselves in the particulars of this or that particular method of establishing that policy. Now I hold, sir, that the electors and that the nation are excellent judges of the policy. In a question of this kind, which appeals to the broad principles of justice before and above all things, in my opinion there are no judges so competent as the electors of this

country, but if we are to enter into the details of this clause and that clause, and ask how many Irish members ought to sit at Westminster, and on what occasions, and of how many members the Irish legislative body is to be composed, and whether there is to be one Order or two—why, gentlemen, you will all tell us that these are the very matters for the discussion and settlement of which you send us to Parliament. It is laid down to you on broad principles; it is for us—under your commission—it is for us to deal with particulars and details.

I am going to quote, gentlemen, from a source that I have not often occasion to quote, from a newspaper which opposes us ten times, and censures us ten times, for one that it supports us; but that, at any rate, makes it tolerably impartial in this matter. It is the *Pall Mall Gazette*.¹ The *Pall Mall Gazette* uses these words in its number of yesterday. It aims at answering the inquiry, What is the question before the electors? Is it a principle, or is it the particulars of a plan? The *Pall Mall Gazette* writes thus:—"The Ministerial faith is this, that we are to agree to establish a legislative body in Ireland for the management of exclusively Irish affairs. This is the one article of the true Ministerial faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved from rejection at the hands of the local caucuses, as a coercionist, a Hartingtonian, a Chamberlainite, or as a heathen man, and a publican." I cannot, gentlemen, commend to you for imitation the good taste of that paragraph, because it is a parody of language which has been used for many, many centuries in connection with the most sacred of all subjects, but I am not looking at the form of it. I am looking at the substance of it, and as to its substance, I affirm that it is strictly accurate. The question you are asked to decide in the affirmative or in the negative is the proposition that we agree to establish a legislative body in Ireland for the management of exclusively Irish affairs. It is a policy, and it is a principle, upon which you are called to vote. It is not a detail, a particular, or even a bill.

And now, gentlemen, I will try that question yet more

¹ At that time an independent Liberal journal.

closely, and bring it to an issue from which, as I hope, there can be no escape; because among the great defections of the present occasion, the great and painful defections, the honour and honesty of which we never question, but the effect of which we deeply lament, is that of our powerful ally, the *Scotsman* newspaper, which has, gentlemen, I think you will allow—and at any rate I am sure you will permit me to think—rendered great and valuable services to the cause of Liberal policy. On this occasion it has at least this merit, that it goes to the root of the matter, and it puts the issue in a way in which it can be met. Well, but, gentlemen, I assure you that is a very great merit. If you are to deal with our antagonists in Parliament, you would know that there is a section of them—a small section, but yet a section that did much to turn the scale—a section of them who put the issue in such a way that it cannot be met, because they tell you at one time that they are in favour of Home Rule, and in favour of the principle of the Bill, and yet they won't vote for the Bill, but will vote against it, because they object to details and particulars of the Bill. Now, the *Scotsman* puts this question in a manner that I think is fair and clear. It writes thus:—“No general professions on the part of Ministerialists of a desire for self-government in Ireland will serve them. One question can be put which will test the value of the meaning of those professions. Let the candidate be asked if he would in a new Parliament support Mr Gladstone's Bill, if it were re-introduced with the alterations pointed to at the Foreign Office.² If he will, he is for disunion, and he ought to be rejected. No play upon words will help him out of this position.” Now, mark the coming words: “Safe self-government for Ireland is one thing, and a most desirable thing.” “Mr Gladstone's Bill is another, and a most undesirable thing.” Well, now, I am ready to make a very handsome offer to the *Scotsman* newspaper, and to all those who think with the *Scotsman*. The *Scotsman* says that safe self-government for Ireland is a most desirable

¹ On the preceding May 27th Mr Gladstone had addressed a meeting of the Liberal party at the Foreign Office.

thing. I am quite sure that when they speak of "safe self-government" they don't mean by the epithet "safe" to emasculate the substantive; they mean, with reasonable precautions, a true, real, effective control of Irish affairs ought to be given to the Irish people. That, says the *Scotsman*, is a most desirable thing. But, gentlemen, that is all we want. That is all we ask of you. We never asked of the late Parliament to tie itself to the particulars of our Bill. I stated in the most distinct manner that there was no part of it which Parliament would not be perfectly free to change. I went further, and said if the change were compatible with the principle, and calculated to forward the application of that principle better than the provisions embodied in the Bill, we would welcome and accept that change. This is no novelty, gentlemen. This is the declaration, as my friend, Mr Childers,¹ could tell you, which I made on the part of the Government, and made by the authority of the Government.

The case is this—we have before us, in the first place, this principle, the establishment of a local statutory legislative body or Parliament in Ireland for the management of affairs exclusively Irish. We then laid down safe conditions which, as we held, were essential to the safe appreciation of that principle. It must be compatible with and conducive to the union of the Empire. It must be founded upon political equality. It must embrace an equitable distribution of Imperial burdens. It must, as we thought, provide reasonable safeguards for the minority; and, finally, it must afford a rational prospect of being accepted as a settlement of the question. But nobody has questioned those conditions. They are admitted to be just and rational. The principle has been stated over and over again, and I have stated it to you now, and I tell you this plainly, it is idle to say the country is to be asked to vote upon the particulars of the Ministerial bill. The Ministerial bill is dead with the Parliament. The principle of that bill survives. I certainly will never be guilty of the dishonesty of promising you, without consideration and reflection, a new plan for giving

¹ Member for South Edinburgh and Home Secretary, 1886.

effect to that principle. I never will accept a new plan unless it be with the belief that it is better than the old one. But I must tell you, in the first place, that I have been grievously disappointed with the barrenness and sterility of mind that has been shown by the critics of our plan, for when they have taken an objection, the very last thing they have shown themselves competent to do has been to suggest an improvement. But, perhaps, that is because they thought they would not waste the treasures of their mind upon such an unprofitable audience as the present Government. Perhaps when they come up again to Parliament—or such of them as get there—they will produce one or more excellent plans. Well, gentlemen, if they do, they will find us the first and the most eager to hail and to welcome them. I promise in the name of my colleagues that we will cast our own Bill to the winds the moment it is shown to us that a better plan for giving effect to our principle can be produced, and the moment it is shown to us that the new plan is not an evasion of the subject, and is not an artful machinery devised for the purpose of defrauding the Irish people of their hope and of their just rights. Don't let it be said, therefore, that Ministerial candidates are to be tested by the Bill placed by us before the present Parliament. We put that Bill before the present Parliament because it was the best that we could frame. No doubt they are much better men than we are, and they can frame a great deal better Bill, or put us in the way of doing it. If they do, they will not be more happy than we shall be, perhaps not quite so happy as we shall be.

Well then, gentlemen, I hope that that matter is made pretty clear. There are not many propositions in politics that cannot be denied; but the proposition I am now going to put to you is, I think, one which scarcely can be denied. The *Scotsman* says:—"Every Ministerialist must be taken to be a man pledged to support the late Bill of the Government." He can hardly be pledged to support the late Government Bill as a Ministerialist when the Ministry itself don't ask it or expect it of him. We don't ask or expect it of him. What we ask and expect of him is that he shall in good faith, knowing the meaning of

his words, and not using other words as feints, and screens, and stratagems, in order to escape from it—that he shall, knowing the meaning of his words, give Ireland the real and effective control over her own local affairs. If he is ready to do that, he is a good Ministerial candidate; if he will pledge himself to do that, why, let him speak by the hour, and by the yard if he likes, to the satisfaction even of the *Scotsman*, and its editor, against the vices, and the defects, and the weaknesses, and the follies of the Ministerial Bills. Well, gentlemen, I hope I have in some degree disposed of that portion of the question, and have shown you that what is before you for your decision—one of the gravest decisions the country was ever called upon to take—is not a clause, not a particular, not a method, not a bill, but is a policy and a principle; and that he who accepts the policy and the principle is our brother in arms; he that resists, he that repels it, he that shirks it, he that uses fictitious means to falsify it, he is not our brother in arms, but, unfortunately, and regarded in all Christian charity, our adversary in the fight, whom we must do our best, without injury to his life, his limb, or his reputation, to discomfit and to defeat. Now, gentlemen, I have shown you that the question before you is the question of a policy and of a principle.

Now, gentlemen, I come to a question still more conclusive, still more weighty. What are the alternative policies that are before the country? It is due to you that you should know them; it is due to you that there should be no mystery and no concealment about them. And here, gentlemen, I will venture to say that I endeavoured to turn to account at Carlisle yesterday the interval of a few minutes in the stoppage of the train, to call attention to an incident of the most interesting character which has lately come to view, and that is the episode¹ in our political history of the communications between Lord Carnarvon² and Mr Parnell. I hope, gentlemen, you will believe me when I say that I have pleasure in referring to this matter, because I do not feel in the least degree

¹ See p. 102.

² Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, June 1885 to January 1886.

called upon to blame either the one or the other of these gentlemen. You may remember, possibly, that last year at the election, although I called upon you to give the Liberal party the utmost possible strength, and make it independent of Mr Parnell—which, happily, you did—yet I never censured Mr Parnell for his disposition to enlist the late Government upon his side, and I never censured the late Government for any disposition they showed to take his side. Not one word of that kind was ever uttered by me to you. But it is extremely important that we should know what did happen between them. Mr Parnell, as you are aware, stated that a member of the late Government, who afterwards turned out to be Lord Carnarvon, had offered to him that the Conservatives, if successful in the elections—if successful in the elections—would grant to Ireland a measure of what is known as Home Rule, together with the right to protect Irish manufactures. Lord Carnarvon denied the accuracy of this statement; Mr Parnell adheres to it. I have not the smallest question, gentlemen, that both that distinguished nobleman and that very remarkable man—I have not the smallest question that they are both of them speaking with perfect veracity, whatever be the point disputed between them. But Lord Carnarvon told us what he did not say to Mr Parnell. Lord Carnarvon also told us that he did not make known the conversation to the Cabinet. Now, Lord Carnarvon told us one very important thing besides. He told us what were his own views as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and as a member of the late Cabinet. He told us that he was in favour of a plan which would meet in full the wants of Ireland with respect to local government, and which would to some extent satisfy her national aspirations. Lord Carnarvon may not like it, gentlemen, but in substance he is our man and not theirs. If he is ready to meet the wants of Ireland as to local self-government, and also in some degree to satisfy the national aspirations of Ireland, I am persuaded there is no room for dispute between him and us. Lord Hartington has carefully avoided saying he is ready in some degree to satisfy the national aspirations of Ireland. Mr Chamberlain has carefully avoided saying he is

ready in some degree to satisfy the national aspirations of Ireland. Rely upon it, gentlemen, this, and no other, is the turning point, and these are the opinions of Lord Carnarvon. But that is not all. That is what he did say. I call your attention, and I wish to call his attention, and I mean to call it repeatedly if necessary to what he did not say. He did not tell the House of Lords, or the public, what it was that he did say to Mr Parnell. He did not tell the House of Lords or the public what he did say to Mr Parnell. I believe, gentlemen, and I shall believe it until it is contradicted, that he told Mr Parnell at least what he told the House of Lords—namely, that he was for satisfying fully the wants of Ireland with regard to local self-government; and that he was for satisfying to some extent its national aspirations. Let us know whether this is so or not. It is very important. If Lord Carnarvon is a disunionist, and if Lord Carnarvon is a disintegrator and dismemberer of the Empire—and that is the language bestowed upon us because we wish in some degree—and in a very moderate degree—to satisfy the national aspirations of Ireland, we are entitled to know how it was that these Tories sat in the Cabinet until the winter with this disintegrator and this disunionist, and then did not put him out for these mistakes, but were excessively sorry to lose him. But, gentlemen, he says he never told the Cabinet. I have not a doubt that was true—not the smallest doubt; but I say this, until I am told the contrary, I shall hold that he did tell Lord Salisbury. You will ask me why do I hold that, and I will tell you why—because it was his absolute duty to tell Lord Salisbury. He had no right to make such a communication to Mr Parnell. If he did communicate to Mr Parnell what he says are his real opinions, he had no right to make such a communication to Mr Parnell, and to withhold that fact from the head of the Government, and as he is a man of honour, and I have no doubt knows his duty to the head of the Government, I cannot for a moment doubt that he told that conversation to Lord Salisbury. But I ask the question, Did he? If he kept that secret to himself, let him

say so; if he told it to Lord Salisbury, then we shall know that Lord Salisbury, who now denounces us for disintegrating and dismembering, was in possession from the month of August or September last—I believe it was August, but I am not quite sure of the date—was in possession of the fact that his colleague was in communication with the great disintegrator and dismemberer, and had told him that he wished to satisfy in some degree the national aspirations of Ireland.

Now, gentlemen, don't suppose I am finding fault with Lord Salisbury. If he himself entertained an inclination in the same direction as Lord Carnarvon, I think it was a very wise inclination. The summit of my ambition was, and would have been, to support him in giving effect to that wise inclination, but I say this, that if he paltered with that subject, if he coquetted with that subject, if, till the election was over, and the 40 seats were secured, he carefully concealed his opinion that satisfying the national aspirations of Ireland is disintegration and dismemberment, then I think he has a very serious responsibility, and a very heavy and very difficult account to render for the conduct he then pursued, placed in contrast with the conduct he now pursues. As far as depends upon me, I intend to contribute what little I can towards elucidating that whole matter on your behalf by putting questions to which I now respectfully solicit reply. What was it that Lord Carnarvon told to Mr Parnell? To whom did he communicate the purport of the conversation with Mr Parnell?

But I have still to deal with this great subject. What are the alternative policies before the country? There is one that I know you understand—the plan of the Government—a real, effective self-government for Ireland, for the management of Irish affairs, having this for its principle, and having for its form and method the very best plan that we could devise, the best that we have devised, the best that we can devise, or the best that anybody else can devise, to which we are ready to give in our hearty adhesion. But the second plan, gentlemen, the second aspect of this question of alternatives, is not altogether a pleasant one—because I am obliged to say that there

are a great many schemes, notions, ideas put before you as alternatives that are not alternatives at all; and I am sorry to be obliged to connect with them the name, first, of one of the most honourable men I have ever known, my late colleague and my present friend, as I trust I may say, Lord Hartington. I am only now testing Lord Hartington as to his alternatives. Now, I am obliged to tell you what, so far as I know, have been Lord Hartington's proposals. Three years ago Lord Hartington formally declared that no concession whatever, great or small, ought to be made to Ireland in the matter of local self-government until there was a fundamental change of conduct—a real penitential reformation—in the conduct of the whole body of the Nationalist members from Ireland. Now, that was Lord Hartington's starting-point. Nothing was to be given until this great conversion had been accomplished. Gentlemen, the conversion is very far from having been accomplished. On the contrary, they persevered, they persisted, they did not entitle themselves to get any of the benefits of Lord Hartington's reservation. They went on, and they became worse and worse. They were more and more determined to work the English Parliament exclusively for Irish purposes, to disturb the course of English politics, and I must say I think in some not inconsiderable degree to weaken the hands of the Executive, and even—though I won't say they intended—even the administration of justice in Ireland. Therefore they have not deserved anything from Lord Hartington since he made that declaration. But since that, while they have only moved in the wrong direction, Lord Hartington has been moving towards them. Last year he appeared even to think that, by a certain number of degrees, you might give Ireland a complete control over her own affairs. At Belfast his words, I think, were these, that you could not make any progress towards giving Ireland anything like complete control over her own affairs by a single stroke; it must be a gradual process. At that time he appeared to think that a gradual process had now become a thing perfectly allowable. Then he went to another point, and he said that he would undertake to make a great and bold reconstruction of the Irish Government. I ventured

to tell him in the House of Commons that, in my opinion, a declaration more visionary than that never issued from the lips of man. But I am not now upon the merits of it: I am only showing to you, gentlemen, what it is you have to look to in other quarters.

I have shown you what you have from the Government. I show you now what you have from Lord Hartington. But now again he has changed, and he no longer talks of a gradual process, but in an address which he published yesterday he says that certain powers which are not mentioned are to be delegated to certain bodies, of number unknown, and this plan he has produced for the first time in his address. Well, now, I want to know what is to be expected from any one who finds it necessary thus to vary his schemes and his propositions—not to vary them in detail, but to vary them fundamentally and radically—who at one time tells you that nothing can or ought to be done; at another time tells you that everything can be done if it is done gradually; and then again changing his ground, says with perfect honour—I am quite sure, with entire honesty and goodwill—says that some bodies might be appointed with some delegated powers; but he does not say what, or how, or where, or when. Gentlemen, these plans are contradictory of one another, but they are the plans of an individual, though a very eminent individual, taken up by nobody. And, above all, gentlemen, I ask you whether you intend to have a plan with some finality about it or not. The plan that we have proposed is accepted by Ireland, accepted by Ireland by the mouths of her representatives, and through the length and breadth of the land, and yet, even then, our jealous opponents say, “Oh, it will not be final.” Then what are we to say to a plan, with respect to which not one of these representatives of Ireland tells you that for a moment he will accept it, or acquiesce in it? Gentlemen, it is trifling with the subject.

I turn to Mr Chamberlain. Last year Mr Chamberlain is supposed to have proposed a plan of a Central Council for the whole of Ireland, with very large administrative powers. That plan, as I believe, was not Mr Chamberlain’s plan, but Mr

Parnell's plan, and Mr Parnell was willing to have accepted it as long as his expectations made him think that was the best he could get. After the Tory Government came in, after Lord Spencer was censured and condemned for his brave and manly government of Ireland, after the determination to repudiate Coercion was expressed, Mr Parnell then said he must have something in the nature of a Parliament. I cannot blame him. I think it was perfectly consistent on his part. But I only mention this—this was the first plan which Mr Chamberlain gave his adhesion to, for which he seemed rather disposed even to have claimed the credit of paternity. Then, at the beginning of this year, Mr Chamberlain went a great deal further. He said—"We must have a large scheme on the lines of Federation." Gentlemen, I have shown in the House of Commons that our Bill is a Bill which advances two material steps towards Federation; that it does two great things, which two things are absolutely indispensable to any plan of Federation. However, Mr Chamberlain said he would have a large scheme on the lines of Federation. He did not end there. Having propounded that large scheme, he next propounded in the same session an extremely small scheme. He said he thought the best plan would be to have four provincial Councils in Ireland by way of satisfying, as Lord Carnarvon says, or rather not by way of satisfying, as Lord Carnarvon says, "to some extent the national aspirations," but cutting the national aspirations into quarters, as a man was hanged, drawn, and quartered of old. So high flies Mr Chamberlain, like the lark; and so low flies Mr Chamberlain, like the swallow before a shower, according to the suggestions of his teeming brain. And if you think I ought not to criticise him in his absence, I assure you I did my best to criticise him quite as freely in his presence, and, if need be, possibly may do it again.

Well now, gentlemen, you would think that I had shown you proof enough of the fertility of that remarkable mind. But he is not done yet. Because he yesterday had a meeting to found a Radical Unionist Association, to frame a plan of local

self-government for England, Scotland, and Ireland. Poor Wales is to have no recognition whatever. The Welsh are a nation, the Welsh have national peculiarities, and I say fairly, if we are to have regard to national peculiarities anywhere, theirs ought to be considered according to degree and circumstances. But, gentlemen, I think it is not necessary for me—indeed, I could not now undertake—I will reserve that for another time—to discuss a plan of local government for these three countries as a mode—recollect what it is—a mode of dealing with the great and crying subject of social disorder in Ireland,—that one broad, glaring, and blazing difference between the countries; whereas these are well-governed, well-constituted, and on the whole contented communities, you have there a community with regard to which it is on all hands admitted that the primary purposes of civilized life have not been and are not attained. Now, gentlemen, I think I may say, having on the part of the Government pointed out to you that we have a policy, and that we have done our best for the plan, and are ready to improve that best as much as we can, or to accept from others what is better, I think I might fairly ask you whether you think that these suggestions of Mr Chamberlain can be taken as a substitute for the plan of the Government.

Gentlemen, I did, in an address to you, written at Hawarden in the month of May, I did describe the plans of the seceding Liberals in language which I am afraid Lord Hartington thinks contemptuous. I look back to it to-day. I described them as halting, stumbling, ever-drifting, ever-vanishing projects of seceding Liberals. I say, gentlemen, it was a true description—it was even a moderate description; it did not do full justice to the incessant shifting and fluctuation of those schemes which are hatched from week to week, essentially different one from another, and put before the country, it cannot be for a substantive purpose, but for the negative purpose of impeding and destroying the projects of the Government.

Now, gentlemen, if you hear me for a few minutes more, I come to the real rival policy. The real rival policy is the

policy of Coercion. Not to quarrel about the mere word, it is a policy of special repressive criminal legislation for Ireland, to be enforced in that country, and not in the other parts of the United Kingdom. That is the other policy. It is between that policy and our policy that you have to choose. It is between that policy of Coercion, and what is called the policy of conciliation or the policy of local self-government. Now, gentlemen, I must entreat you to accompany me while I look with care at the declarations of Lord Salisbury. Yesterday I read a letter of his in a newspaper, dated 16th June, in which he says he has received a letter from a nameless person—I don't mean, when I say nameless, anonymous; that is quite a different thing; but I mean a person whose name which, if it were to be mentioned to you, would not make you—at least it did not make me—a bit the wiser, who said to him that Mr Gladstone had alleged that Lord Salisbury's plan was to ask for new repressive laws, and to enforce those laws for twenty years. Lord Salisbury answers this nameless gentleman, and he says:—"You designate this as one of the most deliberate misstatements on record; and I think your language is hardly exaggerated." Lord Salisbury, the late Prime Minister of this country, says of the present Prime Minister of this country—for want of a better—that it is hardly too much to say that I have made one of the most deliberate misstatements on record. Now, gentlemen, Lord Salisbury is a man of many brilliant gifts, for whom in various respects I have a very sincere admiration and regard; but I am bound to tell you this, that Lord Salisbury is a man whose modes of language have never tended to elevate, but always to lower, the standard of Parliamentary manners. Having said that, I will endeavour to avoid the use of a single epithet in my references to him, and will deal simply with the facts. But in regard to this "deliberate misstatement" of mine, I wish to draw a distinction. That it was deliberate I most fully admit. I hold by it. I mean to hold by it. I mean to repeat it. I mean to impress it on the country as well as I can, and I mean that the country shall fairly have the means of going to issue upon it, to know whether it is true or false. There is no question, gentlemen,

about its being deliberate; but the question is about its being a misstatement; and upon that I request your attention, I pray your attention, for a few minutes.

Lord Salisbury goes on to say this:—"I have never proposed to enforce new repressive laws for twenty years in Ireland." I affirm that Lord Salisbury has proposed it, and I will give you the proof directly. I pass on; I do not ask you to accept my assertion. I will give you the proof directly. Lord Salisbury then says—"The only occasion on which I have mentioned that period of time is in asking for the honest, resolute, and consistent government. If the prevalence and character of crime should be such as to require repressive laws at any time, of course in the interest of the innocent population they must be made, but whether that necessity will exist, and at what time, is a question on which I have expressed no opinion whatever." Gentlemen, can you believe your own ears? Can you believe that the noble Marquis, who says he has expressed no opinion whatever on the question whether a necessity will arise at any time, and if so, at what time, was the Prime Minister of the Government, which on the 26th of January announced in the House of Commons coercive laws for Ireland? That had been heralded by the speech of the Queen, in which Her Majesty was advised to inform Parliament that there was a most formidable state of things with regard to social order in Ireland, and that she expected that repressive legislation would probably be necessary. That was in the speech of the Queen, I think, on the 21st of January. On the 26th of January, in the House of Commons, the announcement was made that immediately, and as a matter of the greatest urgency in point of time, a law would be introduced of the severest repressive character to put down a political association, the National League, and with other collateral legislation, of course, of the same character, and, gentlemen, that announcement was received with the frantic cheers of the whole Tory party, which rang long and loud in the hall in which we sit, as if they had been learning some intelligence dear to their hearts, causing rejoicing to every one whose ears it should thereafter reach.

So much, gentlemen, for the first of these assertions of Lord Salisbury. I place in contrast the declaration he makes in his letter on the 16th of June, that he has not expressed any opinion whatever upon the question whether Ireland would require repressive laws at any time—I put in contrast that assertion on the 16th of June with his own responsible announcement on the 26th of January. I have kept to my word, gentlemen; I have not used one single epithet to heighten the facts; they speak for themselves. Now, did I make a misstatement, or did I not? (No, no.) Wait a moment, please. I said that the plan of Lord Salisbury was to ask for new repressive laws, and to enforce them resolutely for twenty years. Gentlemen, that was a mild statement; I might have said that he had asked for new measures of Coercion. I wished to be strictly within the facts, and I said, for new repressive laws. He now says he has not. What are the words of his own speech?¹ “My alternative policy is that Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland.” I say, gentlemen—I put it to your judgments, that is a demand for new laws. Parliament does not enable the Executive to discharge executive duties. The executive duties of the Government are discharged without the smallest reference to Parliament. If my right hon. friend there Mr Childers advises Her Majesty to remit, or shorten, or abridge a penal sentence, he does a most important and responsible act, but Parliament has no more to do with it than you have. We do not want the aid of Parliament. The law gives us the power. We are in our places by the confidence of Parliament, but, being in our places, we do not ask Parliament to enable the Government to govern the country. Lord Salisbury said, what was requisite was that Parliament should enable it. I say that that means that there should be legislation to enable it. And what follows absolutely proves my assertion. Well, then, Lord Salisbury says “to govern Ireland resolutely,” and, in parenthesis, I want to know whether Lord Salisbury considers that his Viceroys of Ireland—those with whom

¹ At St James's Hall, London, 15th May 1886.

he had to do—the Duke of Abercorn,¹ the Duke of Marlborough,² and Lord Carnarvon—did or did not govern Ireland resolutely. *Apparently they did not, because he says that the one thing necessary is that it should be governed resolutely.* Well, I know a man who did govern it resolutely. Lord Spencer³ did govern it resolutely, and the reward he got for governing it resolutely, not from Lord Salisbury—I must do him that justice—but from the colleagues of Lord Salisbury, was censure, disparagement, and condemnation in the House of Commons.

This is only in a parenthesis. That is no part of the policy now before us. My point is to show that the policy now before us as an alternative to the policy of the Government is the policy of Coercion. What said Lord Salisbury after the words I have quoted—"Govern honestly, consistently, and resolutely" for twenty years? Then come to the remaining words—"And at the end of that time you will find that Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts"—after this blessed course of education—"Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government or repeal of coercion laws that you may wish to give her. What she wants is government—government that does not flinch." I am continually, gentlemen, tempted to deviate into parenthesis; Lord Salisbury's writing is very suggestive. When he says that what we want is government that does not flinch, my memory involuntarily bounds back for 250 years, to the time of Strafford and Laud, when they said in their correspondence with one another—and said it, gentlemen, quite as honestly and as honourably as Lord Salisbury speaks now—that the policy of the Government ought to be what they called "thorough." That name "thorough" was a very favourite and a very important name at that period, and I think it ought to be reprinted and published for the benefit of Lord Salisbury. His words, gentlemen, are these—"At the end of that time Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government or the repeal of Coercion laws that you may wish to give her." Repeal of Coercion laws! But there exist no Coercion laws

¹ Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1874-76. ² 1876-80. ³ 1882-85.

at this moment. *How then are they to be repealed? Because Parliament is to enable Government to govern Ireland. Then there will be coercive laws—they may be repealed or not, as the case may be, at the end of twenty years; and then, and then alone, you give a grammatical and a rational meaning to the words of Lord Salisbury, from which he is in vain endeavouring to escape, and in the net of which he is inextricably coiled.*

I think, gentlemen, I have made good my point. There are certain unreal alternatives, halting, stumbling, ever-shifting, ever-vanishing, which I defy you to take your stand upon more than you can take your stand upon a quicksand, with the knowledge that before you have been on it half a minute, you will be where the poor master of Ravenswood was in the immortal romance of Scott, nothing but the feather remaining above to indicate the spot where he had sunk. Don't you go, gentlemen, on those quicksands, by whatever imposing names they may be recommended to you. There are two policies before the nation—two policies alone—which have the support of 250 Tories at the back of Lord Salisbury, and 310 or 320 Liberals, at any rate, are at our backs. But there are two real policies. You may convert the 250 if you like into 350 or 400. You may reduce us from our 310 or 320 to be 250 or 200. It is all, gentlemen, in your power. Reflect in the name of Almighty God, each one of you in the sanctuary of his chamber, in the sanctuary of his heart and of his soul, what it is in this year 1886, after nearly a century of almost continual Coercion, becoming weaker and weaker, more and more odious, less and less effective as we go along; repudiated now by a large majority of your representatives—what it is to propose this, and only this, as an alternative to the policy of local government for Ireland. It is with you, gentlemen, if there are Conservatives among you, it is with you—consider it for yourselves. I rejoice that you are here upon a footing with us all. Consider it for yourselves, consider what you have to do, consider what you have to answer for. Don't allow yourselves to be led away by craven fear. Have some belief that acting justly you will act strongly—justice is always strong—

join us in the effort to close this painful, this terrible, this awful chapter of the relations of England with Ireland, which for centuries and centuries have been the opprobrium of our country in the eyes and judgment of the world. Join us in that happy, I would almost venture to say that holy effort, and rely upon it, that if we are enabled to attain the end we have in view, we shall have done perhaps even more for the honour of Great Britain than for the happiness of Ireland.

THE GENERAL ELECTION.

LIVERPOOL, JUNE 28TH, 1886.

Mr Gladstone spoke at Hengler's Circus, Liverpool. On the 25th, he had addressed a large audience at Manchester on the same subject.

It is, I can assure you, in reliance very much more upon your patience and indulgence than upon my own physical or moral force that I undertake before this vast assembly to signify acceptance of the address which has been presented to me. What I have to say to you will really be little more than an expansion of the admirable ideas, so far as they are public and political ideas, contained in that address and in the short but excellent speech delivered from the chair by our friend Mr Holt. I would ask you in a contest of this kind, and at an early stage of it, to remember what are the different means by which it is carried on. One of them is argument, one of them is numbers, one of them is enthusiasm, and there are different sets of means besides this, the whole of which I look upon as perfectly legitimate. But there is a different means. One of them is the long purse; another is the display, the imposing display, of rank and station; another is the power of political organization and the command of positions of advantage. Do not let us conceal from ourselves that as regards this second class of weapons we are, I must say, nowhere in comparison with our antagonists. But I turn to the first. I will not speak now of numbers, because that has yet to be put to the proof. But I will speak of enthusiasm, and I will speak of it with every confidence only by reference to experience. It was by enthusiasm that in 1880 throughout the country we carried a great cause and overthrew a strong Government. And this I will

say, without too confident prediction, that the enthusiasm on this occasion has surpassed anything that I ever witnessed in 1880 or at any period of my life. So I look forward without being disheartened. Will you forgive me when I say that it is on that first head—on that first description of arms—that weapon of argument, that I must rely, and it is here that I am most astonished at the weakness of our antagonists. Allow me to give you one illustration. I am not able—neither my sight nor my time permit me—to read all that is said, but I sometimes look at the speeches. I sometimes look at those speeches where I think I am most likely to find strength of argument, and you will not wonder when I say that I look to the speeches of Lord Hartington. I am going to give you an illustration of one of his arguments, from which I infer not the weakness of the man, but the poverty of the cause. Why, what do you think is this argument he makes, and seems to think a very fine thing? I find that in 1881,¹ in the town of Leeds, I denounced the action at that time of the Nationalist party. It is not the question now whether I was right or whether I was wrong, but what Lord Hartington argues is this—"Isn't it monstrous? Here is the very man who denounced them in 1881 supports them now." It is true. Why did I denounce them? Why, because I thought they were wrong. And why do I support them? Because I think and know they are right. It has never been a rule of my life to denounce all men at all times. I endeavour very imperfectly to regulate praise and blame by the conduct to which it is attached. Let me give you an illustration. No man ever attacked more—I will not say violently—well, more earnestly and eagerly than I attacked Lord Salisbury in the years 1878, 1879, and 1880, when he was engaged in conduct which I thought to be not only fatal to the interests, but above all destructive to the honour and character of my country. Therefore I did my best to denounce him and those with whom he acted quite as strongly as ever I denounced the Nationalists of Ireland. But what did I do last winter? I found that Lord Salisbury had, so far as I could judge, in the

¹ October 7.

important affairs of the Balkan Peninsula, been going well and justly, and I praised him and supported him to the best of my power. I never could have conceived anything more ridiculous than that Lord Hartington should suppose that he has got hold of a good argument when he says that I did denounce and condemn what I thought wrong in 1881, and that I am supporting and assisting what I think right in 1886. That is not the only instance I will give you, for, on arriving in Liverpool—on coming to Liverpool naturally I have learnt what is going on in Liverpool—I have learnt something about the state of your local representation, and I need not say that I find with delight that you are about to make a formidable attack upon the monopoly of the Tories. I need hardly assure you how warm are my good wishes on the part of all those candidates who are to be engaged in breaking down that monopoly. Let me speak of one whom I know best, my friend Sir T. Brassey.¹ I make no doubt you will send him back to Parliament, with a goodly company around him. If you do, you will send there one of the best of English gentlemen, a tried servant of the Crown, an experienced member of Parliament, and one who is loved and admired wherever he goes. Perhaps I may remind you that if at any time you should happen to run short in Liverpool of skilled mariners he is a man who will take one of your liners across the Atlantic.

But though I was greatly pleased to find him here, it is not all good that I find going on. I hold in my hand a sheet of paper, which may have been in some of your hands, and upon which I am about to make a free comment, especially because I believe that the authors and propounders of this wonderful sheet of paper, whom we call the Unionists, and who call themselves Liberals, are about to meet in this very place to-morrow night. When they do meet I hope they will direct their attention to supporting the statements that I am now about to challenge. I find it stated in this paper that the loyal Irish are about to be thrust out of their allegiance to the Imperial Parliament. Now the loyal Irish—those who call themselves so, and who, I hope, are so—are not going to be thrust out of any allegiance whatever.

¹ Now Lord Brassey.

The whole Irish people is going to remain in its allegiance to the Crown, in its allegiance to the Imperial Parliament, at whose hands it asks and is prepared thankfully to receive the gift of a legislative body sitting under statutory authority for the control of properly and exclusively Irish affairs. But I tell you what. Do not suppose that I mean that no difference is about to be made. Yes, a great difference is about to be made. The allegiance now rendered to the Imperial Parliament is rendered feebly, has been rendered feebly, doubtfully, grudgingly, variably, half-heartedly, and sometimes not at all. We want, if we can, not to thrust, but to draw men out of that kind of allegiance, and we want to provide that hereafter they shall render in Ireland exactly the same kind of allegiance as you render in England and Scotland—an allegiance coming from the heart, rooted in the mind, governing the conduct, famous in history, and constituting the strength and basis of the State. Well, the next statement in this very inaccurate—I had almost said, forgive me, this most blundering—paper is that we are going to deny to Ulster the privileges which are given elsewhere. I am afraid you have not read this paper as carefully as I have, and I cannot say it will repay you if you do; but I will tell you what I pick out of it, and will just venture to make a remark here and there. It says that we deny to Ulster the privileges that we are going to give to other parts of Ireland. This is doubly untrue. First of all, it is untrue because Ulster under our plan has just the same privileges as every other part, but, further, it is untrue because, as speaking not so much of the whole of Ulster, but of portions of Ulster, we have gone out of our way to say that if a good and rational plan, with general approval, can be contrived under which a part of Ulster can be separately dealt with, we are willing to take up that plan in a friendly spirit. What they call the denying to Ulster what we give to other parts is this—we offer to Ulster an option which we do not offer to other parts, and, in fact, we are giving more to Ulster in that shape than we are giving to any other part. So much for this wonderful paper that I hold in my hand.

Again, this paper states that it is not a question of Home Rule only, but of a Bill that must necessarily and in justice be accompanied by another Bill involving the expenditure of many millions of the hard-earned money of the taxpayers. That means the Land Purchase Bill. But I tell you this, that if those who signed this paper will prove to me what they have said, that the Land Purchase Bill involves the expenditure of many millions, or of any millions of the money of the British taxpayer, I myself will be the man to throw the Land Purchase Bill behind the fire. To spend your money is one thing; to invest your money is another thing. When you buy £100 of Consols you do not spend the money; you invest it. If the Consols were worthless, you would spend it while you thought you were investing it; but as Consols are good and sound, you do not spend but you invest. I should have thought that some of the gentlemen who have signed this paper, with Lord Derby at the head of them, know pretty well the difference between spending and investing. But, gentlemen, mark what I have said—that if it can be shown that this is not an investment, but an expenditure, I cannot ask you to spend your money for such a purpose as we have proposed. Moreover, I wish you to understand that the whole of that question must necessarily be considered afresh from a new starting-point, which if you return us as a Ministry we shall have to set out from when we enter upon the new Parliament. I have said, and I say it again, the end we have in view is consistent with justice, honour, and Imperial unity—to give self-government to Ireland. Everything compatible with this principle it is open to us to adopt, and it is our duty to adopt. Nothing can be adopted by us excepting what is within this principle; and I must say I complain now of the authors of this paper. They ought to have known better what they were talking about, for they say, or seem to say, that we have inseparably joined together these two plans. That is not the fact; and any one who takes the trouble to refer to the speech¹ in which I introduced the Land Purchase Bill will find that there are these

¹ April 16, 1886.

words, "the two Bills are, in our minds, inseparable at the *present moment*," and that I went on to say that a refusal of the offer which we then made must necessarily have most important consequences on the future course of the question. Well, you will understand with me that you are not likely to fall into a snare with respect either to the Irish Government Bill, the Land Purchase Bill, or anything else. He would be a very clever man indeed who passed a Land Purchase Act in the teeth of the national sentiment after he had subjected it to a general election. But this you ought to know, although the paper Unionists conceal it from you and take no notice of it—namely, that you have got at present in operation a land purchase system in Ireland which, in my opinion, is a bad and dangerous system. It is a system under which the British Treasury is made the creditor of a multitude of dispersed individuals all over Ireland; and although I believe that the Irish debtor pays his debts quite as well and as honourably as any other debtor, yet it is not a good or a safe system under which the Treasury is at innumerable points to be placed in contact with the private individual in the relation of the creditor to the debtor. To reform that system, and to substitute something for it better, is a most important part—if not an obligatory part, is a most important part—of the Irish legislation which we hope that we have now in prospect. So much for those three points.

But I must make a general remark, which I think will be intelligible, upon this paper. You see the looseness of the assertions it contains. Well, but when I look at the paper and at the signatures, I find seven most respectable signatures, and at the head of them the signature of Lord Derby, who is known to me as well as to you as being a most cautious, careful, and accurate man. I tell you fairly I do not believe that Lord Derby would have put his hand to that paper if it had been a paper to be signed by him alone. But gentlemen will put their hands to a great many things when they do not sign them alone, but in company with others, things to which they would on no account put their hands if

they had to sign them alone. I tell you what it reminds me of sometimes. It sometimes unfortunately happens that a soldier for some great offence has to be shot to death. How is it done? Not by setting up the soldiers there, where that gentleman stands under the platform, and asking me, for example, at this moderate distance, to take a shot at him. It is not a difficult thing to hit him. Still, they would not ask me to do it alone, because they know it would be rather a painful operation, and so they ask ten or twenty men to shoot at the unfortunate man. He is pierced with bullets, and nobody knows whose bullets they are. And just in the same way it is that none of these gentlemen are likely to be wholly responsible for these assertions, yet, clubbing themselves together like the soldiers who have to fire, they venture it and put their signatures to it. Now this is an illustration of a very great and important fact—namely, the fact that you are opposed throughout the country by a compact army, and that army is a combination of the classes against the masses. I am thankful to say that there are among the classes many happy exceptions. I am thankful to say that there are men wearing coronets on their heads who are as good, as sound, as genuine Liberals as any working man who hears me at this moment. Still, as a general rule, it cannot be pretended that we are supported by the dukes, or by the squires, or by the established clergy, or by the officers of the Army, or by any other body of very respectable persons. And what I observe is this, whenever a profession is highly privileged, whenever a profession is publicly endowed, it is in these cases you will find that almost the whole of the class and the profession are against us. But if I go to the more open professions, if I take the Bar, where, though it is endowed in its higher regions, yet in its lower regions every man fares according to his merits—if I take the medical profession, where that invaluable body of men minister to your wants, each of them perfectly contented to stand or fall by his capacity for performing his great work—in these open professions I am thankful to say that we make a very good and respectable muster indeed. For a good many years past, if you had taken

the dividing line of the House of Commons, you would find—and such members of Parliament as are present I am sure will bear me out—the majority of the able and distinguished lawyers have sat on the Liberal side of the House. Still, on this question, I am sorry to say, there is class against the mass, classes against the nation. Will the nation show enough unity and determination to overbear constitutionally and at the poll that resistance of the classes? It is very material that we should consider which is likely to be right. Are we likely to be right? Are the classes ever right when they differ from the nation?

Well, wait a moment. I draw this distinction. I am not about to assert that the mass of the people who do not and cannot give their leisure to politics are necessarily and on all subjects better judges than the leisured men and the instructed men, who have great advantages for forming political judgments that the others have not. But then I will venture to say that upon the one great class of subjects, the largest and the most weighty of them all, where the leading and determining considerations that ought to lead to a conclusion are truth, justice, and humanity—upon these, gentlemen, all the world over, I will back the masses against the classes. In this great controversy we pride ourselves very much on having regard to history, and we assert—and I wish the paper Unionists would pay a little attention to it—that they shut their eyes against history. But let me apply a little history to this question, and see whether the proposition I have just delivered is an idle dream and the invention of an enthusiastic brain, or whether it is the lesson taught us eminently and indisputably by the history of the last half century. I will read you rapidly a list of ten subjects, the greatest subjects of the last half century. First, abolition of slavery;¹ second, reform of Parliament, lasting from 1831 to 1885, at intervals; third, abolition of the Corn Laws and abolition of 1200 Customs and Excise duties² which have set your trade free; fourth, the navigation laws,³ which we were always devoutly told were the absolute condition of maintaining the strength of this country and of this Empire; fifth,

¹ 1833.² From 1842 onwards.³ 1849.

the reform¹ of the most barbarous and shameful criminal code that ever disgraced a civilised country; sixth, the reform² of the laws of Combination and Contract, which compelled the British workman to work, as I may say, in chains; seventh, the change of foreign policy. Gentlemen, you may recollect—I mean now 60 years ago—you have heard of the Holy Alliance. You may know that for a considerable time the policy of this country was subordinated in a great degree to the Holy Alliance. Mr Canning, an old representative of Liverpool, whom I rejoice to say my father brought to Liverpool, emancipated the country from its servitude to the Holy Alliance, and for so doing he was more detested by the upper classes of this country than any man has been during the present century. Eighth, I take another piece of foreign policy. There was what we call the Jingo policy;³ that was not put down by the classes, it was put down by a hearty appeal to the people. Ninth, the abolition⁴ of religious distinction; and tenth—I take the matter in which I had a little hand myself—the disestablishment of the Irish Church.⁵ These ten subjects—many of them are really not single subjects but groups of subjects—are the greatest subjects that have formed the staple food of our political life for the last 60 years. On every one of these ten subjects, without exception, the masses have been right and the classes have been wrong. And, gentlemen, it will not do to tell me that I am holding the language of agitation. I am speaking the plain dictates of fact, for nobody can deny that on all these ten subjects the masses were on one side and the classes were on the other side, and nobody can deny that the side of the masses and not the side of the classes is the one which now the whole nation confesses to be right. But recollect I have not gone as far as to say the masses will always do right and the classes wrong. On a great many subjects I think it may very likely be otherwise, and I have given you

¹ On the recommendation of the Criminal Law Commission, 1837.

² An Act to amend the law relating to Trades Unions, 1871; The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1871; The Employers and Workmen Act, 1875; The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875.

³ 1874-80.

⁴ 1829, 1858, 1871, 1880.

⁵ 1869.

what I think is the test. But a recent authority goes a great deal beyond me. You will be shocked almost when I read to you what he says. He said these words only a year and a half ago at Blackpool—"Governments will go wrong"—[A voice—"Lord Randolph's?"] That is rather hard upon me, gentlemen. I was preparing what I thought a very good theatrical effect, and my friend over in the corner has prematurely let the cat out of the bag. I am going to quote from Lord Randolph Churchill. I am told he has said a good deal about me lately, but I cannot say whether that is true or not; I have not been careful to inform myself. I have not named his name before in this election, and I do not think I shall name it again. He is a very difficult person to give an impartial and fair account of, but my own opinion of him, very imperfect as it is, is that if by any process you could cut out of him about half of the qualities he possesses you might make out of the other half a valuable and distinguished public servant. Now let me read my quotation from Lord Randolph Churchill about the masses and the classes. It runs as follows—"Governments will go wrong, Parliaments will go wrong, classes will go wrong, and the Pall-mall clubs always go wrong; but the people do not go wrong." You see, gentlemen, how Lord Randolph, in his brisk manner, sweeps away all the little reservations and securities and cautions which I had endeavoured to set up as an "old Parliamentary hand" on behalf of the classes against the masses. He will admit no qualification at all—the masses are always right, and the classes are always wrong.

Now, gentlemen, I am going to make, if I may, and if you have patience to follow me—I am going to make a threefold appeal to Englishmen, and not to Liberals alone. I appeal to their prudence, I appeal to their courage, and I appeal to their sense of honour. And first to their prudence. Have you considered, gentlemen, the present condition of your Parliament? Many and many a man of you has at heart some question closely associated with his interests and life, and many and many a man of you has perhaps still more nearly at heart many a question associated with the

welfare of the community. Are you satisfied with the capacity which your Parliament has lately shown for dealing with those questions? You know as well as I do that for legislation generally your Parliament is in a state of paralysis. It has worked hard, many a man has sacrificed his life to his public labours, but the difficulties are such that they cannot be overcome. And what is the cause of these difficulties? The cause of them has been Ireland. On account of Ireland, what has happened to the questions which we laid before the country last autumn? What has happened to the temperance legislation? What has happened to the legislation about the land laws? We want to reform the land laws, and one of the objects we have in view is to give to the labouring man readier and easier access to a real interest in the land. And there is a certain Mr. Jesse Collings, who is extremely anxious that the labourer—I believe he is the man who promised the three acres and a cow—I have never shared in that promise and whether he does or not I do not know, I rather believe he does so—but that gentleman who promised three acres and a cow is now in the field as a candidate to prevent Parliament from doing its work. He stands for a division in Birmingham, and his object is to block the way to all useful legislation by leaving the Irish question in a position in which every man of sense knows, whatever his inclination may be, that no real work can be done until that question is got out of the way.

I see here a man of great ability, Mr T. P. O'Connor,¹ who has been an important member of the body of Nationalists. I suppose no delicacy need prevent me from stating before him what is, I take it, quite indisputable, that this body of Nationalists have considered that the interest of their country in the condition in which she stood was primary, and that it was for them to urge it, under all circumstances and at all times, irrespective of the effect it might have in blocking the business and paralysing the action of Parliament. I cannot be surprised at it. I do not complain of it. I refer to it as a fact. But you have had a specimen of it for the last six years. I

¹ Member for the Scotland Division of Liverpool.

know pretty well what it is. Is it likely to be better—mind, I am now only on the argument of prudence—will it be better in the next six years? Gentlemen, I tell you that what has been done by Ireland in the last six years is but a trifling miniature and specimen of what will result in the next six years unless you take thought and counsel, not from the mere will of these gentlemen, but from the necessities of the case. Why, in the last six years the Irish Nationalist party has consisted of somewhere about 40 or 50 men at the highest; they have had no backing from England or from Scotland; one or two men have given them qualified and occasional assistance, but you may fairly say that they have had no backing on the whole; and being 45 members out of 103, pray observe that, whatever condition they might be in, they were speaking the true sense of Ireland. Yet they have never been in a position to assert that with authority. No 45 men representing a country which returns 103 can possibly say, “We are the nation speaking for itself. How does the matter stand now? They are no longer 45 but 85; they are no longer something more than a third of the Irish representation—they approach five-sixths of it. They now are virtually, I do not hesitate to say, if there be such a thing as constitutional principles, if we really believe in representative institutions—and we think we hold them dearer than our life—if we really believe in them, I say, that these 85 gentlemen, say what you will and what you like, speak for the Irish nation, and are virtually the Irish nation speaking for itself in Parliament, just as much as a corresponding proportion of English members or of Scotch members would be the English or the Scotch nation speaking for itself in Parliament. Then, as I told you before, hitherto they have had no backing. Will that be so now? Why, take the most sanguine estimate that any paper Unionist can form, and, indulging all the flights of his imagination, let him defeat Liberal candidates right and left, and send in mock Liberal candidates in their places, it will all come to nothing. There will be and there must be differences; there will be and must be in every coming Parliament a powerful body of English and of Scotch representatives who are

at heart and soul attached to the cause of self-government for Ireland; who will not and whom nothing will induce to surrender or betray that cause. Do not conceal it from yourselves. I will exhibit it in a more amusing point of view if I can, though the matter is a serious one. Ireland is the mistress of the situation. Ireland is mounted on the back of England as the old man in the *Arabian Nights* was mounted on the back of Sinbad the Sailor. Do you recollect that incident? I hope you have not all of you given up reading the *Arabian Nights*; it is a great pity if you have. I will read a passage from it. Sinbad is upon one of his islands. He sees the venerable-looking old man, and invites him to get on his back. The old man mounts accordingly. He takes him wherever he wishes to go. But at last he begins to wish that the old gentleman would dismount. "I said to him, 'Dismount.'" He made the demand a very modest one—"Dismount at thy leisure," but he would not get off my back, and wound his legs about my neck. I was affrighted, and would have cast him off, but he clung to me and gripped my neck with his legs till I was well-nigh choked. The world grew black in my sight, and I fell senseless to the ground like one dead." Sinbad is the Parliament of England. The old man is Ireland, whom we, by our foolish initiative, have almost compelled to place herself upon our backs; and she rides you, and she will ride you, until, listening to her reasonable demands, you shall consent to some arrangement that justice and policy alike say are right. So much for the appeal to prudence. I want to see that Parliament goes to work, and I know it cannot go to work effectively. Let it struggle as it will, the legs are gripping the neck; it is well-nigh throttled; the world grows black in its sight, and virtually it falls to the ground—and at the end of each session some beggarly account is presented to the world of the good it has not been able to do and the laws it has been incompetent to make.

I appeal to the courage of this nation. How is the English nation as to courage? I will give you my opinion. For real dangers the people of England and Scotland form perhaps the bravest people in the world. At any rate, there is no

people in the world to whom they are prepared to surrender or to whom one would ask them to surrender the palm of bravery. But I am sorry to say there is another aspect of the case, and for imaginary dangers there is no people in the world who in a degree anything like the English is the victim of absurd and idle fancies. It is notorious all over the world. The French, we think, are excitable people; but the French stand by in amazement at the passion of fear and fury into which an Englishman will get himself when he is dealing with an imaginary danger. Now, we have got before us one of the best cases that I ever knew of an imaginary danger. The imaginary danger is this, that if in high sense of justice as well as of policy we make to Ireland a great and inestimable boon—first of all, the Irish are such a set of fools that they will not see that their interest is to receive that boon in a becoming manner; secondly, they are such a set of monsters that our good actions towards them will be simply a basis and incentive to the worst actions on their part towards us. That is what we are to set out with—the cool assumption that God Almighty has made those people monsters or idiots in human shape. Well, then, let us suppose that is true, and they come to a tussle with us, how do they stand? How do we stand? They are five millions of people, and I am sorry to say I am afraid that they are still a decreasing five millions. They hope that this change now meditated may lead to the growth of their population. I hope so too, and if there be any English labourer who is afraid of the competition of the Irish labourer—I do not know whether there are or not in Liverpool—I think it is reasonable to suppose that an Irishman—and whatever he is he certainly is a being that loves Ireland—that there is not any Irishman who will not get back to Ireland as quickly as he can, and so diminish the pressure of that competition upon the English labourer. The Irish are five millions of people, decreasing, poor, without public establishments, without army, without navy, without any title or any power (under the Bill that we propose) to create either an army or a navy. Such are the formidable antagonists you have to look in the face.

Now, let us see how you stand on this side of the channel—a body already exceeding 30 millions of people, a population constantly increasing, a population knit, and well knit, together as much as any population in the world; a population with a powerful Army and with an all-powerful Navy; and a population to which you are about to add a strength that, in its relations with Ireland, it never yet has fully enjoyed—the strength of a just cause. And so it is that, in that extraordinary inequality, you are exhorted by the paper Unionists and by the Tories to shrink back from this frightful danger, and from a conflict which can never come with a people which could never resist. Allow me to illustrate this by a very short and simple tale of Dean Swift, who had the power of conveying truths in a form such as no man who ever lived enjoyed. Only recollect that what we are speaking of is the portentous matter between England and Ireland; and Dean Swift has said somewhere that there are upon record various well-authenticated cases where it is historically clear that ten men well armed have fought with one man in his shirt and beaten him.

Well, now, bear with me a moment while I give you yet one more specimen of your paper Unionists who are to figure here to-morrow night. They say what a dreadful case it will be, that after all they predict has come to pass—it never will come to pass—but still, after all that has come to pass, there will be no remedy against Ireland except that of armed force. These gentlemen are extremely shocked at the idea of holding Ireland by armed force. I want to know how you hold it now? I want to know how you have held it for these six and eighty years? You have held it by armed force. Do not conceal from yourselves the fact, do not blind yourselves to the essential features of the cause upon which you have to judge. By force you have held it; by force you are holding it; by love we ask you to hold it. Our opponents, who have been very patient indeed of the evils of force while they had it, and who seem to have been perfectly content with having for ever a rule of force in Ireland, so when we proposed this very different and contradictory method they were roused to

a state of horror, because they think they will all go wrong owing to the monstrous and incurable wickedness of this Irish nation, and that they will have again to resort to force, which, if they did resort to it, would be exactly putting themselves where they are now, and where they have been for six and eighty years, and where, to all appearance, they are perfectly content to remain.

One more appeal. I appeal to the honour of England. It has been a matter of some surprise to me—and of pain much more than surprise—to see that in this controversy upon the side of our opponents, the honour of England is never mentioned. I have heard enough of honour in my lifetime to make a man sick, if it were possible, of the very word, but that has been always honour pleaded as an excuse for bloodshed. We heard enough of honour in 1878, 1879, and 1880. We heard of “Peace with honour” at a time when the representatives of England, for the first occasion in our history, came back from an illustrious Congress¹ of Europe, and had been in that Congress from the beginning to the end of its proceedings the foes of liberty and the champions of oppression. Then it was that they came back and said, “We bring you peace with honour.” No, gentlemen, thank God, through your action in 1880, which I hope you will repeat in 1886—thank God, we were enabled to break down that system, to give liberties which had been denied, to put together again countries that had been broken to pieces, to establish peace and tranquillity where nothing reigned but disorder, war, and cruelty.

And now I make a plea to you for the honour of England, not for bloodshed, not for strife, but for the wiping away of those old and deep stains which are not yet obliterated, but which deface and deform the character of an illustrious nation in the face of the world, in regard to which condemnation has been recorded against you for generations past in every civilised country, and with which now at last at this late moment we are seeking effectually to deal. But is there no honour except that which causes the sword to be drawn, in integrity, in justice, in humanity, in mercy, in equal

¹ At Berlin, 1878.

rights, in purity, in horror of fraud and hatred of falsehood? Honour is the life and soul of civilization. It is to that honour which I appeal, and which now we wish to relieve from the burden and from the stains that encumber it. Ah! when I opened this question in the House of Commons on the 8th of April I said very little about the Act of Union, for two reasons—first of all, because, looking at the facts, whatever that Act may have been in its beginning, I do not think that it could safely or wisely be blotted out of the Statute-Book. But there was another reason. I did not wish gratuitously to expose to the world the shame of my country. But this I must tell you, if we are compelled to go into it—your position against us, the resolute banding of the great, and the rich, and the noble, and I know not who against the true genuine sense of the people, compels us to unveil the truth; and I tell you this—that, so far as I can judge, and so far as my knowledge goes, I grieve to say in the presence of distinguished Irishmen that I know of no blacker or fouler transaction in the history of man than the making of the Union. It is not possible to tell you fully, but in a few words I may give you some idea of what I mean. Fraud is bad and force—violence as against right—is bad; but if there is one thing more detestable than another it is the careful, artful combination of force and fraud applied in the basest manner to the attainment of an end which all Ireland—for the exception might almost be counted on your fingers—detested, the Protestants even more than the Roman Catholics. In the Irish Parliament there were 300 seats, and out of these there were 116 placemen and pensioners. The Government of Mr Pitt rewarded with places—which did not vacate the seat as they do in this country, if I remember aright—those who voted for them, and took away the pensions of those who were disposed to vote against them. Notwithstanding that state of things, in 1799, in the month of June, the proposal of the Unionists was rejected in the Irish Parliament. The Irish Parliament in 1795, under Lord Fitzwilliam, had been gallantly and patriotically exercised in amending the condition of the country. The monopolists of the Beresford and other

families got the ear of Mr Pitt, and made him recall Lord Fitzwilliam, and from that moment it was that the revolutionary action began among the Roman Catholics of Ireland. From that moment the word "separation," never dreamt of before, by degrees insinuated itself in their counsels. An uneasy state of things prevailed, undoubted disaffection was produced, and it could not but be produced by abominable misgovernment. So produced, it was the excuse for all which followed. Inside the walls of Parliament, the terror of withdrawing pensions and wholesale bribery in the purchase of nomination boroughs were carried on to such an extent as to turn the scale. Outside Parliament, martial law and the severest restrictions prevented the people from expressing their views and sentiments on the Union. That the detestable union of fraud and force might be consummated, the bribe was held out to the Roman Catholic bishops and clergy, in the hope of at any rate slackening their opposition, that if only they would consent to the Union it should be followed by full admission to civil privileges, and by endowments which would at any rate have equalised the monstrous anomaly of the existence of the Irish Church. Ah! that was the state of things by which,—by the use of a'l those powers that this great and strong country could bring into exercise, through its command over the Executive against the weakness of Ireland—by that means they got together a sufficient number of people, with 116 placemen and pensioners out of 300 persons, and with a large number of borough proprietors bought at the cost of a million and a half of money, at last they succeeded in getting a majority of between 42 and 46 to pass the Union. Well, I have heard of more bloody proceedings. The massacre of St Bartholomew was a more cruel proceeding, but a more base proceeding, a more vile proceeding, is not recorded, in my judgment, upon the page of history than the process by which the Tory Government of that period brought about the Union with Ireland, in the teeth and in despite of the protest of every Liberal statesman from one end of the country to the other.

Was it possible, gentlemen, to atone for so great a wrong? I will

make one admission. The Union produced changes so enormous, the whole machinery of the Government had to be reconstituted to such an extent, and the alteration of system was so vast, that in my opinion it became the duty, at any rate of Englishmen, after the Union had once been passed and consolidated as a mere statute, to see whether it could be made to work compatibly with justice and with honour. Therefore I am not at all surprised when I find that men like Grey, who had been one of the most illustrious and vehement opponents of the Union in his earlier years, declined to be responsible for unsettling it. He said, and I think with perfect truth, that there was a great deal to do, that Ireland had great grievances which Parliament might redress, and that if it was possible it was certainly desirable to avoid the unsettling of so vast a piece of legislation. Yes, gentlemen, how have we atoned since the Union for what we did to bring about the Union? Mind, I am making my appeal to the honour of Englishmen. I want to show to Englishmen who have a sense of honour that they have a debt of honour that remains to this hour not fully paid. The Union was followed by these six consequences—first, broken promises; secondly, the passing of bad laws; thirdly, the putting down of liberty, fourthly, the withholding from Ireland benefits that we took to ourselves; fifthly, the giving to force and to force only what we ought to have given to honour and justice; and, sixthly, the shameful postponement of relief to the most crying grievances. I will give you the proof in no longer space than that in which I have read these words. Broken promises! The promise to the Roman Catholics of emancipation, and the promise of endowment. Emancipation was never given for 29 years. It would have been given if the Irish Parliament had remained. It would have been given in the time of Lord Fitzwilliam. It was never given for 29 years.

The Union came, but no endowment. Well, you will say, and I should say, for that I cannot be sorry. I cannot wish that the Roman Catholics should have received endowment. But, on the other hand, it was a base thing to break your promises to them. Passing bad laws! Yes, slow

as it was to pass good laws, the Parliament could pass bad laws quick enough. In 1816 it passed a law¹ most oppressive to the Irish tenant. It was the only law relating to Irish land of any consequence that ever received serious attention until the year 1870. Restraint of liberty! What happened after the Union? In 1810 the people met largely in Dublin. Almost all the Roman Catholics of wealth and influence in the country, and a great deal of the Protestant power too, met in Dublin for the purpose of protesting against the Union. Not the slightest heed came of their protest. In 1820 there was a county meeting of the shire of Dublin, for the purpose of paying compliments to George IV. The people moved a counter resolution, and the counter resolution complained of the Act of Union. The sheriff refused to hear them, refused to put their motion, left the room, and sent in the soldiers to break up a peaceful country meeting. ["Shame."] Oh, it is shame indeed. Fourthly, they withheld from Ireland what we took ourselves—the franchise. The franchise in Ireland remained a very restricted franchise until last year. In England it had been largely extended. As you know, by the Acts of 1867 and 1868, you thoroughly reformed your municipalities, and you had true popular bodies. In Ireland the number of them was cut down to 12, and after a battle of six years, during which Parliament had to spend the chief part of its time upon the work, I think about 12 municipalities were constituted in Ireland with highly restricted powers. Inequality was branded upon Ireland at every step. Education was established in this country—denominational education—right and left, according as the people desired it. But in Ireland denominational education was condemned, and until within the last few years it was not possible for any Roman Catholic to obtain a degree in Ireland if he had received his education in a denominational college. Such was the system of inequality under which Ireland was governed. We have given only to fears what we ought to have given to justice. I refer to the Duke of Wellington, who himself said, with a manly candour, that the fear of civil war and nothing else was

¹ See p. 118.

the motive for—I might almost say coercing the House of Lords—certainly for bringing the House of Lords to vote a change which it was well known that a large majority of them utterly detested.

Well, sixthly, we shamefully postponed the relief of the crying grievance. Yes, we shamefully postponed it. In 1816 we passed an Act to make infinitely more dependent and assailable the position of the Irish tenant. Not till 1843 did we inquire into his condition. Sir Robert Peel has the honour of having appointed the Devon Commission. That Devon Commission represented that a large number of the population of Ireland were submitting with exemplary and marvellous patience. These people, whom we are told you cannot possibly trust, were submitting with marvellous and unintelligible patience to a lot more bitter and deplorable than the lot of any people in the civilised world. Sir James Graham in the House of Commons admitted that the description applied to three and a half millions of the people of Ireland, and yet we went on. Certainly a great deal of good was done in improving the legislation of this country in a wonderful manner, especially by the great struggle of free trade; but not till 1870 was the first effort made, 70 years after the Union, to administer in any serious degree to the wants of the Irish tenant, the Irish occupier—in fact, the wants and necessities of the mass of the people of Ireland.

Now, I say that that is a deplorable narrative. It is a narrative which cannot be shaken. I have been treading upon ground that our antagonists carefully avoid. It is idle to say we have done some good to Ireland. Yes, we have. By the Acts of 1870 and 1881 we have done good to Ireland, and by the disestablishment of the Irish Church we have done some good to Ireland, and by the enlargement of Maynooth grants Sir Robert Peel did good to Ireland. Yes, and it is by the success of these very Acts alone that the paper Unionists can show that we have done good to Ireland. These very Acts are down to the present day denounced by the Tory party—the Church Act as a sacrilege and the Land Act as con-

fiscation. I humbly say it is time that we should bethink ourselves of this question of honour, and see how the matter stands, and set very seriously about the duty—the sacred duty, the indispensable and overpowering duty—of effacing from history, if efface them we can, these terrible stains which the Acts of England have left upon the fame of England, and which constitute the debt of honour to Ireland that it is high time to consider and to pay. Let me ask the question of our friends the Tories or Conservatives—and I hope there are some of them here—why should they oppose it? I want to know why a man, because he is a Conservative, should oppose it. Why is it a Radical measure to give self-government to Ireland, unless it is Radical because it is just? I can understand that every Radical—and I have no doubt there are a great many Radicals here—is well content to a certain extent with that view of the case. But what do my Conservative friends say? Is it Radical because it is just? No, unless they are to come to the conclusion that it is not Conservative because it is just, and would only be Conservative if it were unjust. That is what I want to persuade them—that they are doing themselves an injustice. I do not appeal to the Conservatives here present or elsewhere upon the ground that they will be beaten. They know that as well as I do. But they do not care much about that, and shall I tell you why? They are well accustomed to it. I read you out ten subjects. On every one of them they fought. On every one of them they were beaten. And now I am charitably endeavouring by good-humoured attempts at persuasion to save them from being beaten again. I want to save them by showing, if I can, without, I hope, offending even the best Radical that hears me, that Radicalism is in no way the special characteristic, the distinctive feature, of this measure.

What are we doing? Are we introducing what is new? That is the device of Radicalism. No, we are doing what Tories always preach to us, restoring what is old. A statutory Parliament in Ireland is no novelty. Does the love of antiquity to which a Tory lays claim carry him no further back than the time of his own grandmother, for 86 years, and 86

years alone? Has he no reverence for anything that happened before 1880. [A voice—"Certainly."] Somebody says "Certainly." I hope that it is true, and if it is true he must vote with us on this occasion. It is essentially a work of restoration in which we are engaged. The Parliament of Ireland when it was extinguished was 500 years old. It was not a gift to Ireland; it had sprung from the soil. It had an unhappy connection with us, but in 1782, by an act of late but great wisdom, the Parliament of Ireland was placed upon a footing on which she would have worked out the regeneration of that country, and was working it out patiently and steadily, had it not been for the evil fate which induced the British Government to interfere and to prevent that Parliament from consummating its beneficent undertaking. Therefore, I say we go back to that time. We ask you to constitute that Parliament, to divest it by the free consent of Ireland of whatever might have made it work inharmoniously with the rest of the institutions of the Empire. But, essentially, we ask you to do that work of restoration; and if Conservatives will not follow us in that work, they are opposing, not only us, but their own principles, according to every enlightened sense and construction of such principles.

I have only this one remark to make. I am very much struck with the important difference between the opposition offered us in this case and the opposition which has been offered on all former occasions. I take the case of the Corn Laws. The opponents of the laws thought that they were doing, and they were doing, a very great good; but the friends of the corn laws were accustomed to say that it was by the corn laws that the people, and especially the peasantry, of this country were kept upon a much higher level of subsistence and comfort than the peasantry of the rest of Europe. That allegation entirely broke down in the long run; but all I wish you to see is that the opponents of abolition thought it necessary to have some allegation of the kind, and were obliged to say something satisfactory on their side of the case. What is shown by the Tories and paper Unionists?

What is the redeeming feature to which they point in the case which we are trying to cure, and to which they will not allow us to apply a remedy? We contend that there is no redeeming feature at all. They tell you that capital is driven from Ireland, that confidence is destroyed, that population is diminishing, that the law is not respected, that social order is sapped and undermined, and that it is necessary to have a proscription of 20 years of repression, of coercion. It is under these circumstances that your paper Unionists are to meet to-morrow night in this building, and to devise means for upholding a cause so miserable that it is denuded even of the thin pretexts that have made opposition in other cases respectable, which has enabled men to blind their own understandings, and to play with their own consciences, whereas here facts are glaring and stare us in the face. Coerce you cannot. By coercion you could not advance—even if you could coerce. Conciliate they will not. But we ask the people of England and of Scotland to override them, and in the name of justice to say it shall not be so.

In that touching address which was presented to me at the beginning of our proceedings, I was reminded that in this city I first drew breath. I have drawn it, gentlemen, for 76 years, and the time cannot be far distant when I must submit to the universal law, and pay the debt of nature. It may be these words I speak to you are the last that I shall ever have the opportunity of speaking in Liverpool. I say that to you—well, it is in better hands than ours. I say that to you, gentlemen, to show you that I am conscious of the deep solemnity of the occasion, and of the great controversy which has been raised between nation and nation. I wish we could expand our minds and raise our views to a point necessary to understand what these controversies really are, how deep their roots go down, what enormous results they produce upon the peace and happiness of mankind, and through what enormous periods of time they extend. Many of you will recollect, in that spirited old ballad of "Chevy Chase":—

"The child that is unborn shall rue
The hunting of that day."

And so, should you fail in your duties on this occasion, should the idle and shallow pretexts that are used against us bewilder the minds of the people of England or of Scotland, or should the power of the purse of wealth or the title of station, of rank—should all these powers overbear the national sense, I fear it may again be true that the child that is unborn shall rue the voting of that day. I entreat you—you require it little—but I entreat through you the people of this country to bethink themselves well of the position in which they stand, to look back upon the history of the past, and forward in the prospects of the future, to determine that it shall be no longer said throughout the civilised world that Ireland is the Poland of England. Let us determine not to have a Poland any longer. We have had it long enough. Listen to prudence; listen to courage; listen to honour, and speak the words of the poet:¹—

“Ring out the old, ring in the new.”

Ring out the notes and the memory of discord; ring in the blessed reign and time of peace.

¹ Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cvi.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT (IRELAND) BILL

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MARCH 29, 1887

Mr A. J. Balfour became Chief Secretary for Ireland in Lord Salisbury's Second Administration on March 5th. On March 28th he moved for leave to introduce the 'Crimes' Bill, which ultimately passed into law. On March 24th Mr Gladstone spoke against the motion for urgency for this Bill, and frequently on the Bill during its passage through the House.

MR SPEAKER, I listened with great pleasure to the very able statement of the right hon. gentleman, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, last night, and the observations I made were, in the first place, that the issues were so extremely grave as to make it desirable, so far as I was myself concerned, to take a few hours for reflection before attempting to offer any suggestion or opinion to the House; and, secondly, that the House itself, whether from the gravity of those issues, or from being startled by the nature of the propositions which the right hon. gentleman himself described as extreme propositions, was—particularly on the other side—under the influence of some degree of surprise, perhaps,—it might seem hardly courteous to say bewilderment—but was in a state, at least, of momentary uncertainty, when the right hon. gentleman, notwithstanding the ability of his speech, sat down amid the silence of his friends. I have already stated my opinion of the character of his speech, if I am right in the observation I made—as to which I have not the smallest doubt, so far as matter of fact is concerned—and I hope I have put it so as not to convey the slightest shade of disparagement of the ability of the right hon. gentleman. There can be no doubt that last night was an historical night in the proceedings of the House of Commons. It was, in some senses, a complement to an important night¹ of the first Session of 1886, when I myself had

¹ April 8, see p. 1.

the arduous duty of proposing to Parliament what was known as the *Irish Government Bill*. I then ventured to state that, in the judgment of the Cabinet which at the time existed, we had arrived at the point where two roads met, or, rather, where two roads parted—one of them the road which marked the endeavour to govern Ireland according to its well-understood constitutionally-expressed wishes, within the limits of safety to the Constitution; the other, the road which had been principally marked by extra-constitutional—some would say un-constitutional—measures, repressing the liberties of the people, and which, if it were pursued at all, it then appeared to us might threaten to grow more and more marked and pronounced in their character. At the same time, there was some dissent from that opinion, and a considerable number of gentlemen—with whom we had been in close political alliance down to that date—considered that there was a third course open to them, a course of Liberal concessions to Ireland, stopping short of what we had proposed—namely, the creation of a legislative body with a responsible executive, and based upon the principle of concession, on the one side, which they deemed liberal and yet safe; but upon careful avoidance of coercion on the other side, which, therefore, they declined to admit was the alternative for a plan such as we proposed. Later on, I will refer again for a moment to the opinion which has now been brought to the test. But I will only now describe the views with which I have looked upon the state and prospects of parties in the interval which has elapsed since the election, so far as Ireland is concerned. I know, sir, that at the election, in the midst of the crushing defeat which the late Government sustained, their friends were aware that in the midst of that crushing defeat, both Liberals dissenting from the course they pursued and large numbers of hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House expressed an anxious desire to make large concessions to Ireland in respect of the management of her own affairs. I did hope that we might have before us a course—not so happy as that which I should have anticipated from a full and definite measure, but, at any rate, a course in

which we should be engaged simply in discussing with opponents, though we were obliged to differ from them, the question whether the measures proposed by them, and admitted to be beneficial in themselves, were or were not sufficient. In such discussions I am certain that there would have been many of us who would have had every disposition to meet the party now in power without compromise of our own opinions yet, to accept readily and thankfully measures which were good in themselves, and which might also be good as tending to exhibit some degree of increased confidence on the part of the Conservative party; and those linked with them, in the conduct and dispositions of the people of Ireland. We were desirous that no time should be lost by the party opposite in the preparation of such measures; and we expressed the desire, but the expression was treated as a kind of treason against the existing Government, and we were at once rather peremptorily told that no attempt should be made to hurry the Government in its pace. We were disappointed in respect to Ireland by such a warning, but unwilling to raise controversy on the subject. And we did not utter a word of complaint.

Eight months have now elapsed since the accession of the present Government to office. Where is that fair vision of promises, falling short of our extravagant designs, but at the same time kindly beneficial, in a liberal and conciliatory direction? They have all vanished into the thin air—with the exception, of course, of the vision of the future Land Bill, of which the main thing we know is that it is admitted that it has omitted and excluded the chief recommendation of the Royal Commission of Earl Cowper appointed by the Government.¹ With that exception, there stands before us nothing but the figure of coercion—bare, gaunt, and bald, but, alas! too familiar to all our recollections.

Sir, I intend to oppose the motion for the introduction of this Bill. No amendment has yet been moved, but I see that there

¹ Appointed in August 1886 to inquire into the working of the Land Acts of 1881 and 1885. It reported in February 1887.

stands in the name of the hon. member for Cork¹ an amendment—"That the House do resolve itself into a Committee on the State of Ireland." I certainly should support that amendment as being, I believe, in Parliamentary form. Well, sir, I hope I have said nothing offensive. I will not knowingly say it. It is impossible to speak upon a subject of this kind in weak and emasculated language; but gravity and calmness are important, and to be valued on such matters just in the same proportion as they are difficult to maintain. I will, however, honestly, and to the best of my ability, endeavour to maintain them, and I certainly do not depart from them in re-stating what just now fell from me—namely, that when objection is taken upon the very broadest grounds to the policy of an important and extra-constitutional measure proposed by the Government, there can be no more regular and no more convenient method of opening the question than by moving for a Committee of the whole House on the state of Ireland, which, according to well-known and familiar Parliamentary precedents, opens the whole subject of Irish policy, and enables hon. members to bring into contrast with the course proposed the various, and, possibly, very numerous grounds upon which they think another course should have been preferred. I shall oppose the motion, and I shall support the amendment—if it be moved—upon grounds which I will shortly state—namely, that the allegations upon which this proposal is founded are absolutely insufficient and unsatisfactory—that they do not cover the grounds upon which alone, on all former occasions within my recollection, Parliament has been asked to pass measures in abridgment of public liberty; that the Bill, which has been described as extreme, seems to have been raised in its stringency in proportion to the thinness and the poverty of the statements which were alleged; and that, so far as I am able to form a judgment, in which I cannot expect and do not ask hon. gentlemen opposite to concur, the measure, instead of being a cure, instead of being a palliative, will do nothing, can do nothing, but aggravate in their deepest seat and foundation the worst disorders of Ireland.

¹ Mr Parnell.

This is no dilatory plea. I do not deny that the case of Ireland is a grave case—God forbid! We never should have put aside all the course of Liberal policy last year, and subjected ourselves temporarily to almost destruction as a party, which we knew was our possible fate, if we did not believe it to be a grave and extreme case. But this we knew or thought. We knew that Ireland must be compared with herself. The right hon. gentleman has returned to a subject from which he will get no profit whatever—namely, an observation of mine—a commonplace observation and a truism—that, in considering crime in Ireland, you must not look solely at its amount, but you must look at its character, its area, its roots, and consequences. If there be one commonplace more familiar than another in discussions upon Irish social disorder, it is the observation that in Ireland certain classes of crime are symptomatic, and must not be considered simply with regard to the person guilty and the person injured, but with regard to the feeling they manifest, and the sympathies or antipathies they draw forth. But that handy commonplace observation has no effect whatever in supporting and strengthening the present case, because the comparison of crimes, in the case of Ireland, in reference to character and quality of crimes in other countries, has no force at all. Where a Government is proposing to introduce a coercive measure for Ireland, it is bound to show the existence of some strange and exceptional state of affairs, that exceptional character being measured not by the reference of Ireland to other more happily conditioned countries, but by comparison between Ireland as it is at one time and Ireland as it is at another.

One word more upon the position of the House in reference to this matter. I am extremely sorry to find that the sharpness of the issue which the Government has found it necessary to raise may, and it is likely even to be, aggravated rather than allayed by the methods of proceeding adopted. In the first place, there has been withheld from us all the information—official information—which, in a matter of this kind, is habitually placed before us. In the second

place, we have been required to submit to an absolute suspension of our free initiative on every subject, and a majority of more than eighty members has sustained the Government in exacting a new and indefinite suspension of that initiative; and now the Leader¹ of the House acquaints us that, in consequence of the fact that the Government has a certain power, which power all former Governments, on every occasion, have subordinated to the rules and usages of Parliament, and in some degree to those alleviations of public toil which nature demands and custom has established—that those are all to be set aside, and we are told that no recess or adjournment of the House will be allowed until the Bill has been read a second time. Do not let the right hon. gentleman think that he entirely removes the sting from an announcement of that kind by stating that he does not use it as a threat. If I am walking in Parliament Street, and am met by a man who says, “If you walk another yard I will knock you down, but I do not mean it as a threat”—in such a declaration I do not think there is much comfort. But there would be more consistency in such a declaration, or more comfort in the alleviating addition made to it than by informing us—as the right hon. gentleman does—that while he means to ride over us, as he has hitherto done in respect of information, and by the entire absorption of the time of the House for months now rapidly multiplying, he expects us also to do what I have just indicated. I will not dwell upon that point, and should not have referred to it save that I had always observed that it was possible for the Government, by much consideration for the usages of the House, and even some for their opponents, to avoid sharpening, and to procure mitigation, of the bitterness of political strife.

Now, sir, what is the case made by the right hon. gentleman? I affirm that he has not even attempted to make good the allegations which it has been the fixed custom of Parliament—and of Parliaments less reformed than this, and less based on the broad foundation of popular

¹ Mr W. H. Smith.

suffrage—uniformly to exact. He has withheld from us all figures, except a very few extracted across the table last night. He said something of the enlargement of crime in Ireland in the last three years; but he did not refer to Parliamentary figures. He gave us no means of testing his allegations. Nevertheless, by the kindness of a friend I have obtained what is sufficient, I think, to show the House the nature of the ground on which the right hon. gentleman thinks the Government rests in proposing what he himself feels compelled to call an extreme measure in restraint of national liberties. He said that for three years there had been an increase of crime in Ireland. Sir, I shall decline to examine the increase of crime in Ireland between 1884 and 1885, because, such as it was, it occurred before the present Government were in office at the close of 1885—an increase which they did not deem at that time, nor did they deem it during the months of the autumn when the elections were approaching, nor at the close of the year when the elections had taken place—they did not deem that the increase justified the proposal of a repressive Bill, and they met Parliament reserving that question for future consideration. But I have got—and I take—the figures for 1885 and 1886. Do not let the House think there was much change, but there had been a change, undoubtedly, between 1884 and 1885. There had been an increase in the number of threatening letters, from 422 to 512. That increase the Government of that day—identical, except as to one or two individuals, with the present Government—did not deem a sufficient ground to justify them in asking Parliament for an increase of the stringency of the law.

I have got the figures for 1885 and 1886; and I have got the crime returns by the constabulary divided into “threatening letters” on one side, and “cases other than threatening letters” on the other. Now, sir, with respect to threatening letters, they are a social inconvenience—a social mischief; but it would be ridiculous to speak of them in connection with such a question as the legislative restraint of the liberties of the people. Otherwise we have to grant that, whereas in

1885 there were in Ireland 432 threatening letters, in 1886 there were 507 threatening letters. That difference in the increase of 75 letters, I presume, will not be alleged by Her Majesty's Government as the broad ground on which they ask Parliament to give its sanction to an extreme measure of repression. How does the case stand with reference to cases other than threatening letters—because that is the first count in the speech of the right hon. gentleman? He kept back the figures, but I have got them. He prudently had no desire——

MR BALFOUR,—They are all before the House.

MR GLADSTONE,—Before the House! Before the compilers of public papers—before those who can go and bury themselves in the papers of successive years, and in the Library, and add up the figures, and do the work which ought to be done in public offices for them, and which, on every occasion that I have known, has been done.

MR BALFOUR,—The right hon. gentleman asked me for a Return of the figures a few days ago. I put it in the hands of those whose business it is to prepare such Returns—and the Return is now on the table of the House—at the first opportunity.

MR GLADSTONE,—In supplement to that, I may say I return my thanks to the right hon. gentleman for the mercy he has shown me. I am not finding fault with the right hon. gentleman or the Government for want of courtesy. I am speaking of their total failure to discharge a public duty, such as is, by usage and precedent, bound to be performed by the Government asking Parliament for extreme powers of this kind. I ask the right hon. gentleman if he has ever read of the way in which Lord Althorp introduced the Coercion Bill of 1833—the great precursor of an important series of measures? He will find that Lord Althorp did as Mr Forster¹ did in 1881. He at once put before the House the necessary information. I will not go further in this matter. I will at once put the House in possession of the whole breadth and substance of the

¹ As Chief Secretary, he carried the Protection for Life and Property (Ireland) Bill, and the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Bill.

Government's case. The right hon. gentleman went so far towards enlightening us when he came to the point of his speech last night as to say that there had been an increase for the years 1885 and 1886, which I am going to test. The cases reported in 1885, other than threatening letters, were 512. The cases reported in 1886—which the right hon. gentleman describes as exhibiting an increase of crime that has had to do with and apparently forms the main part of the foundation for the demand for what he calls an extreme measure—had risen—how much does the House think?—from 512 to 518. I shall make good my point—my first assertion—of the total insufficiency of the allegations of the right hon. gentleman in support of his demand of such a grave and extreme nature.

MR BALFOUR,—I said I did not rely on these figures.

MR GLADSTONE,—If the right hon. gentleman did not rely upon them, why did he use them? That does not in the least mend his case, because our contention is—and it is proved by Parliamentary history—that the right hon. gentleman, as the practice of Parliament invariably has been, has failed to produce and make good these allegations of an exceptional extension of the prevalence of crime, as the necessary ground for an application for increased stringency of the law. I ask the Government to meet that allegation, and overthrow it if they can. Then the right hon. gentleman does not rely upon an exceptional state of crime in order to justify the case for coercion. He does not rely upon that which all Governments and all Parliaments have been accustomed to give as an essential condition. Well, sir, was his account of the charges of the Judges complete? I get no answer. *

MR BALFOUR,—What was the point?

MR GLADSTONE,—My words are—Were the accounts of the Judges' charges complete?

MR BALFOUR,—The right hon. gentleman asks for an answer. I think my account of the Judges' charges was complete—for the counties I mentioned.

MR GLADSTONE,—What does the right hon. gentleman say in regard to the county of Tipperary? Did not he

quote anecdotes of outrages there? I believe he did in the county of Tipperary. The county of Tipperary, then, was within his view. Why did he not give the Judge's charges there? I have the honour of knowing that Judge, because he was Solicitor- and Attorney-General in a Government with which I had the honour to be associated; and he is a man whose abilities are well known to many hon. Members of this House. But the charge of that Judge was totally contrary in its effect to the apparent bearings of the charges quoted by the right hon. gentleman; and I again ask, why have we not an impartial and complete representation—if it was to be made at all—of the charges of the Judges? And, sir, what were the charges quoted by the right hon. gentleman, as far as the extracts enable us to judge? The rest of the charges I have not had an opportunity of reading. They were totally different, I will only say, from the charges which I have commonly heard quoted to influence debate, as having been delivered by Judges; because the charges upon which I have known reliance to be made have been charges in which the Judge was dealing with judicial facts, and gave his opinion upon those judicial facts, and, consequently, could have his opinion tested by men of ordinary reason and information. But these charges were passages detached altogether from the consideration of judicial facts. They were passages soaring into the region of speculation. In more cases than one the only judicial fact noticed by the Judge was the smallness and the fewness of the offences; and then the Judge indulged in reasonings in order to prove that with this absence of extensive crime there was a most formidable state of things, in which the Judge may be right or wrong, but in respect of which he carried no judicial authority whatever. He has entirely exempted himself from those tests to which, in his ordinary duty, he is subject when he is dealing with judicial facts in a judicial manner.

Then, sir, the right hon. gentleman goes on from the charges of the Judges to the anonymous evidence. I am far from saying such information must necessarily be unre-

liable; but the right hon. gentleman appeared to be under the impression that when a Minister or a Government has had certain information, and has satisfied himself upon it, he has nothing to do but to come down to this House and state that he has satisfied himself upon it, and thereupon obtain increased stringency of the law. Again, it appears to me that the right hon. gentleman's Government have emancipated themselves from all regard for Parliamentary precedent and usage. There is an alternative. When they have got a very grave state of facts, either in Ireland or in a Colony, or in any portion of the country, it sometimes happens that it would be too great a responsibility for the Government to take upon itself the production of the names of all the persons who have been instrumental in establishing that state of facts. That I admit; but the course that is repeatedly taken, and which was taken by the Government, is to go to a Committee of this House, to lay before that Committee the facts and the names, and it is in the discretion of that Committee to call for further proceedings, and then for the Government to come to this House fortified with the judgment of that Committee formed from all quarters of the House. Why has that not been done? I decline to accept the anonymous assurances that the right hon. gentleman seems to think, for the first time, so far as I know, he can impose upon Parliament. The right hon. gentleman mentioned one pointed case of outrage, where the name was withheld. He mentioned one horrible case of an outrage—I am not sure whether the name was Hogan—an outrage upon a girl, where her hair was removed and pitch poured upon her head. It was a very bad and abominable outrage indeed. The right hon. gentleman, speaking with perfect simplicity, appeared to think that removing of the hair and pouring pitch upon the head was a Nationalist invention. If he turns to his Irish history, he will find it was an invention of the Governors of Ireland. It was the practice of the soldiery and the yeomanry, in whose traditions some hon. Members of this House have declared their glory, in the unhappy and disgraceful period preceding

the unhappy incorporating Union. The right hon. gentleman quoted another case in which I do not know why the name was withheld—a case in which a tradesman had apologised to the National League for having unwarily dealt with some persons that he ought not to have dealt with. Why should the gentleman's name be withheld? He had made good, apparently, his footing with the National League. He had what is called eaten humble pie. He had nothing to fear. If the gentleman's name was withheld, it was withheld for fear he should be boycotted from very different quarters, and I must presume that there were possibly very good reasons for withholding the name. Then the right hon. gentleman proceeded to the point that referred to boycotting. Some hon. gentleman, under an irregular impulse, which it is always best to endeavour to suppress, cried out—"How many of those boycotted were Protestant Home Rulers?" The right hon. gentleman sneeringly said—"Is there such a thing as a Protestant Home Ruler outside of this House?" Yes, sir; there are Protestant Home Rulers, and there are Protestant Home Rulers who have come under the lash, not for their Protestantism, but for their Home Rule, notwithstanding their Protestantism. The cases are very rare in which boycotting does anything worse—and God knows that is bad enough—than to deprive people of the sole and honourable means of subsistence—some persons on account simply of disapproval of their political opinions. Well, sir, I had a case made known to me a few weeks ago, when I was called upon to subscribe for the support of a Protestant clergyman who was turned out of his curacy in the Disestablished Church for this reason—and no other reason was even alleged—that he was a Protestant Home Ruler. The right hon. gentleman, if he will examine a little, will find that there are not only Protestant Home Rulers, of whom he may hear in the course of time, but likewise that there are Protestant Home Rulers who have suffered for their opinion.

Well, sir, I come to the subject of boycotting. That really, I think—as far as I can pretend to give an opinion,

—is pretty well the foundation of the case of the right hon. gentleman, because the rest—and particularly this part of it—is either of a very insufficient character, or is so shrouded by the anonymous, that it is hardly fit that ordinary members of Parliament should intrude into all that mystery and reserve. But the boycotting can be dealt with, and the figures which the right hon. gentleman was good enough to give us across the table at our request showed that there was a total of 836 persons in Ireland either partially or totally boycotted. Now, that, I am not wrong in saying, appears to be a principal part—ay, the principal part—of the foundation for this extreme demand which is made on the House. Well, sir, has that ever happened before? What happened in October 1885? In October 1885 there were partially boycotted 714, totally boycotted 165—total, 879. The Government have 836 cases, and they form a conclusive ground for changing the law in respect of liberty. But in 1885 there were 879 such cases, and they formed no such ground at that date, which was a month before the General Election. And not only so, but Lord Salisbury grappled with the fact that there existed this large number of boycotted cases, and he boldly contended that they formed no ground for legislation, and it could not be dealt with by legislation. I ask any member of the Government who may next enter into this debate to show us the difference between the boycotting which prevailed in 1885, and which was inaccessible to legislation, and the boycotting of 1887, which not only is to be accessible to legislation, but which is to form a main—the main—ground of the demand of the Government for it. *

Beyond this, what have we from the right hon. gentleman except generalities? Intimidation! “Intimidation,” says a member of the Government, in citing from a high authority—namely, Sir Redvers Buller¹—“Intimidation is rampant.” Yes, sir; but there is a point of the utmost importance to be observed in order to form a sound and thorough comprehension of what is

¹ He had been despatched by the new Government to put down “moon-lighting” and “boycotting” in the west and south-west of Ireland.

meant by intimidation. Exclusive dealing, in the general sense of boycotting—at any rate, of boycotting until it assumes an extravagant form—is divided by a thin and fine line from intimidation. Intimidation is a word which requires much sifting and scrutiny before you can judge what value attaches to it as the demand for extra-constitutional legislation. Now, sir, there is one mark which attaches to intimidation in its grosser forms which is infallible, and it is this—that intimidation, wherever it is real and prompted by an illegal spirit, breaks out into crime. In 1881, when we had to propose a great measure of Coercion with respect to which my right hon. and learned friend, the member for Bury,¹ says—and, I believe, rightly—that it was an ill-chosen measure, our proposition was this: that as the agitation which was then carried on—whether we were right or wrong is not now the question—the question is what allegation we made and what allegation was generally accepted by the House and felt to be generally necessary for our case—the allegation we made was that “wherever agitation went crime dogged its footsteps,” and through the country crime increased, and not only intimidation, but intimidation with crime and outrage, was becoming rife through the land in proportion as the movement then going on, being generally against the payment of rent, made head. But now the admission has been generally made by men giving a cordial and almost a delighted support to Her Majesty’s Government, though some of them sit on this side of the House—the admission has been made that the intimidation which now prevails in Ireland is generally detached from crime and outrage. Do not let them suppose that I am endeavouring to entrap them in quoting that admission or assertion of theirs. Nothing of the kind. It is no dangerous admission or assertion made by them. It lies upon the face of the facts, because, whereas the essential condition of any legitimate or tolerable application for increased stringency of the Criminal Law is that you should prove the exceptional predominance and prevalence of outrage, it is admitted and undeniable that at this moment

Sir Henry James.

there is no such exceptional prevalence and predominance of outrage. Therefore, sir, this intimidation, which is said to be rampant, and which I have no doubt in certain parts of the country is rampant—and it is a very painful circumstance that it should be rampant against any individuals in the exercise of their legal rights—this intimidation seems to be generally separated from outrage. That is the last ground upon which the Government appears to place this extraordinary demand for what they describe as an extreme measure.

We have, therefore, this extraordinary state of things—that the demand is now made upon the reformed House of Commons to do what, in my opinion, would be one of the most formidable breaches of trust that any popular Assembly possibly could perpetrate. I wish I could qualify these words. I do not dispute the taste of hon gentlemen. On the contrary, I assure them that if I use a word beyond the necessities of the case, as I measure it, I would gladly soften it. In my opinion, it would be one of the very gravest and grossest breaches of trust which a Representative Assembly could commit to relax the conditions upon which alone it has been its rule to give a sanction to changes in the Criminal Law for the purpose of giving it increased stringency against a particular portion of Her Majesty's subjects. No case, sir, in my judgment, has been made for such a demand; there has not even been, I might almost say, the shadow of a case presented to satisfy the ordinary conditions, while on the other side there has been a candid confession of the absence of evidence. The right hon. gentleman has been good enough to give us a sketch of the provisions of the Bill. It was no fault of his if a person like myself, or many other persons, felt it impossible to form any accurate estimate of the exact value and extent of each provision as he delivered it. We shall certainly ask for full opportunity to examine its provisions when they come before us in proper shape. We shall ask and press reasonable requests to the effect that, in the first place, every representative of an Irish constituency, and, in the second place, that every representative of a constituency on this side of the water who values

liberty himself, or who knows that it is valued by those who sent him here, shall have full and ample opportunity to sift and scrutinise and weigh the extreme proposals which the Government have felt it their duty to place now before us.

I shall not, therefore, go into particulars now; but I shall mention only two points. The first is, that Irish trials in the cases defined by the right hon. gentleman are to be held in London before English juries. There have been some sinister predictions in the newspapers of a proposal of this kind. I thought it my duty to the Government not to believe them. I did not believe that I should live to see the day when a proposal so wounding, so insulting, so exasperating, so utterly in contrast with the whole of the lessons that Irish history teaches, would have been submitted to a British House of Commons. We shall have an opportunity of saying more upon this when we have the exact definition before us. But this I know—that as trial by jury means trial by our peers—trial by those who are as nearly as possible in the same circumstances—according to the favourite language of modern science, in the same environment with ourselves,—that this is the exact reversal of that fundamental principle that, whenever we do interfere with trial by jury, it is above all things to be desired that you should avoid the capital and fatal error of sacrificing the substance while you keep the form; and that nothing can be worse than to give to the Irishman the cruel and the grievous wound that such a proposal as this would inflict. I never saw such a blow struck at the national feeling of Ireland. I may be quite wrong—I have no authority on the subject—but the impression I derive from anything I know about the history of Ireland is that an Irishman feels and suffers more profoundly in his nationality than in any other thing whatever. I might, perhaps, quote a famous sentiment of Mr. O'Connell to illustrate in some degree my meaning. Mr. O'Connell, as a very young man of perhaps 25, took an active part and gained his first distinction as an opponent, together with the bulk of the Irish Bar—much to their honour—of the measures of the British Government and

a portion of the Ascendancy party in enforcing the Legislative Union of Ireland against the will of the nation. Mr. O'Connell, as a lawyer, depended wholly for his social position on a repeal of the Penal Laws, but he solemnly and publicly declared that whatever his own individual position might be, he would far rather see the whole of the Penal Laws restored by an Irish Parliament and an Irish authority, and continue to subsist in Ireland under Irish authority, than he would see a law pass for the purpose of giving away the national existence of Ireland by the extinction of her Parliament exercising that authority. I think if hon. gentlemen opposite would construe that declaration in the spirit in which it was uttered, they would feel that there was a great deal of nobleness in that declaration, and that the country where it was uttered was a country where national feeling was, above all things, within the limits of safety and prudence, to be considered. Well, sir, before people condemn that excess of national feeling, if it be an excess, they should recollect how the whole history of Ireland has gone to intensify that feeling, and to make it the governor and the regulator of every other feeling that the people possessed. If that be so, I must own I do not believe—I make no complaint, imputation, or insinuation against the honest intention with which this provision has been devised, but I claim my right to form an impartial estimate of it—I do not believe the wit of man could possibly have devised a scheme more likely to aggravate every mischief that exist in Ireland, and to stimulate rather than allay the anti-national feeling of hatred and enmity. I would say one word with reference to the provision, or rather absence of provision, as to duration. The right hon. gentleman humorously said that the absence of limitation of time compensated for the presence of the limitation of space—a limitation, however, apparently entirely dependent on the will of the right hon. gentleman and the Lord-Lieutenant. Well, sir, that I must say makes one's blood run cold. It is, indeed, a very sad state of things that, after eighty-seven years of the working of the Legislative Union—which was, no doubt, intended by many even of those who used

such incredibly guilty means to effect it, to be the harbinger and certain seal of peace and goodwill between the two countries—after three generations of men have gone on cobbling at the business of coercion, struggling as we could—with good intentions, no doubt, and here and there with intervals when the sun of liberty might rise unclouded upon Ireland—at least for a time—that now, what we proposed as a temporary remedy is to become a rule for the subsistence of the Irish people. The brand of inferiority is to be placed on them for ever, and they, in the full enjoyment of a representative system, are expected to acquiesce in, to welcome, and to embrace and hug the law which salutes them with such favours. In fact, sir, this is the first attempt, as far as I know, to work into an affirmative proposition the contrary to that which has often been delivered in this House as a negative proposition. I believe it was the right hon. gentleman,¹ the senior Member for Birmingham, who first declared that “force is no remedy,” and that expression has in our hearts and sentiments obtained an almost universal acceptance. We are now called upon to entirely reverse the order of our thoughts and proceedings on this point, and to support a Bill which embodies the affirmation of the principle that force is a remedy.

This Bill, it will not be denied, is a complex one when considered as a Bill to amend the Criminal Law. All I heard of it last night—although I must not presume to speak as a lawyer—shows that it is a complex measure, and I need not apologise to the House for not endeavouring to enter further into its provisions, such as in their general character they have been described by the Government. Now, by whom are these provisions to be carried into law? We have been challenged by the Government to give our support to the Advisers of the Crown, and it becomes necessary to examine the question not only of what is the action, but who are to be the agents. Of course, the principal agents must be that party which constitutes the largest—by much the largest—of the four minorities² into which this House is divided.

¹ Mr. John Bright.

² Conservatives, Liberals, Dissident Liberals, Nationalists.

They will supply numerically the strength of the divisions by which the matter will be decided. What is their responsibility? In my opinion, a very great responsibility, and yet, at the same time, as far as I can judge, it is far from being the greatest. If this Bill is to be carried, I cannot despair that some of these gentlemen—I cannot but cherish the hope that if they think the case produced by the Government requires coercive provisions—would yet shrink from some portions at least of this Bill, especially from such unheard-of portions as those to which I have lately referred. I cherish that hope, and will not abandon it, because I have seen this—that gentlemen of Conservative opinions go to Ireland with upright English minds, and warm English hearts, though perhaps with a bias against Ireland, to a certain extent, but with no hopeless, obstinate, incurable determination or hatred against her, who after a little time have come to change their views as to Ireland. I see that Lord Carnarvon¹ goes to Ireland and adopts opinions to an extent not precisely defined in favour of Irish national aspirations. Sir Robert Hamilton² went to Ireland, and for all I know he may have been as good a Tory when he went there as any. Does any gentleman happen to know the contrary? This I can say—because I had a hand in sending him there—that he was not sent there as a Liberal, and I never heard in my life that he was a Liberal. He certainly had not the smallest element of a Home Ruler in him; but he appeared to me a fair average of the best men in the British Civil Service, with, probably, no strong political opinions. Undoubtedly, all his prepossessions were adverse to Home Rule, but his mind and his heart were open, and I should like to know what hon. gentlemen think were his sentiments when he left?

Well, sir, I will not speak of other distinguished gentlemen; but I know there are other distinguished gentlemen in the Irish Civil Service at this moment who have gone to Ireland and undertaken practical work in connection with the Land Act, and who have, in consequence, become profoundly convinced that it

¹ Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, June 1885 to January 1886, when he resigned.

² Under-Secretary for Ireland, 1882-1886.

is for the interest of us all to grant Ireland self-government in her local affairs. I therefore do not despair of hon. gentlemen opposite, nor will I presume to censure too severely the course taken by any hon. gentleman; but they must not censure me unless they can reply to me, because I am unable to give the vote which is going to be given or has been given by the right hon. gentlemen the senior Member for Birmingham, by the noble Marquess the Member for Rossendale,¹ by my right hon. friend the Member for West Birmingham,² and by my right hon. and learned friend the Member for Bury. Can I be wrong—can I deserve censure—when these great and tried friends of liberty give such votes? I am not now saying whether the vote is right or wrong. I am not censuring them—I am asking where the responsibility lies? Numerically, it so happens that although the highly distinguished section of Liberal politicians to whom I refer is the smallest of the four minorities in this House, although the party opposite is far more numerous, yet numerically the cast is in their hands, but I do not look so much to the numerical as at the moral responsibility. The moral responsibility, in my opinion, covers and shields the action of hon. gentlemen opposite in a manner such as their best hopes could scarcely have conceived. It cannot be supposed that I am questioning the responsibility of others, or that I am questioning the title and the duty of my noble friend and my right hon. friends and others to whom I have referred, to act according to their own consciences in this matter. They have done that. They have a perfect right to do it. We all have a right to give application to our principles, to speak for ourselves, to determine for ourselves, and act for ourselves, in this most solemn matter,* and to make it a matter of personal complaint and petty bickerings is, in my opinion, morally wrong and intellectually futile, childish, and contemptible. Each gentleman retains his right of full, free agency as much at least as we do, and his whole duty is to act according as his judgment and conscience dictates. Still, they cannot conceal from them-

¹ The Marquis of Hartington, afterwards Duke of Devonshire.

² Mr J. Chamberlain.

selves that the question is whether they, and none but they, shall lay upon Ireland the yoke that is now proposed to lay upon her—without production of any of the proofs which it has been the uniform practice of Parliament to require of the Government to supply. If I speak thus freely of others, I do not flinch from admitting the responsibility that rests upon those who sit in this portion of the House, and who form the great bulk of the Liberal Party, even in the House, and still more in the country.

The right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary for Ireland has made an appeal to us, and has stated that I said this was the first time that a Coercion Bill had ever been proposed without the assent of the two great parties in this House. The citation of the right hon. gentleman was quite inaccurate, and the correction that I hastily supplied—though I think it was a great improvement on the citation—was not as accurate as it might have been. I have the power of reference. I never said, as far as I know, anything about the case of all Coercion Bills in that respect. What I think I said was, that I spoke of the case of the Bill of 1881; and I said my experience was, and my language was at the time, that we never could have carried that Bill except by the general concurrence, amounting nearly to unanimity, of the whole of the Members for Great Britain. The right hon. gentleman, standing upon that ground, says that it has been the uniform practice of the Opposition of the day to support the proposals of the Ministry of the day in the main and in the bulk. I suppose he meant, without reference to details, for increasing the stringency of the Criminal Law. The right hon. gentleman is quite inaccurate, and has not borne in mind the Bill¹ of 1846, on which not only did the bulk of the regular Opposition refuse to support the Ministry of the day, but they actually threw out the Ministry of the day upon it.

But the question is, whether we are, in consequence of the appeal of the right hon. gentleman, to abandon the attitude

¹ The Bill gave the Government additional repressive powers for Ireland. It was thrown out by 292 to 219.

which we have taken up? Now, sir, in my opinion, we cannot abandon it, and we cannot abandon it for the sake of the Government, as well as for our own sakes. A great change has been brought about in Ireland; and I believe it is quite true that, though grave social evils may remain in the country, and must remain until serious legislative changes take place and have had time to work, yet the position assumed by the bulk of the Liberal Party in this country has had the effect of applying a singular and a most valuable mitigation of what might have been a most intolerable evil. You must recollect what is involved in these two propositions, both of which seem to be undisputed—one, that in other times intimidation, exclusive dealing, and strong public feeling against the administrators and the administration of the law habitually broke out into extensive outrage, telling its own tale in the statistics of the country; but now this has ceased, and although there is a stronger feeling than there ever was, and a more national feeling than there ever was, with which the Government feel themselves in conflict, yet it is admitted, although that national feeling is charged as the author of combination and intimidation, that, as a rule, this combination and intimidation, whether mischievous or otherwise—that I am not going to discuss—has not broken out into outrage. Have hon. gentlemen opposite—have the present Government—considered the enormous change that has been brought about in Ireland as regards legality and as regards abstinence from violence and crime? If not, let them listen to the case which I will give them in less than a minute as it stood in 1832, and why I quoted it in a speech last year on the 8th April. In 1832 the homicides in Ireland were 248; in 1885 they were 65. The cases of attempts to kill, happily unfulfilled, in 1832 were 209; in 1885 they were 37. Serious offences of all other kinds in 1832 were 6014; in 1885 they were 1057. The total number of the whole criminal offences in Ireland in 1832 were 14,000; in 1885 they were 2682. It is right to bear in mind that there has been a large diminution of population since 1832. The account of that diminution reduces the proportion of offences in 1832 from

14,000 odd to 10,000; and the case stands thus—that the whole of criminal offences in Ireland in the same population in the course of these 55 years has diminished to one-fourth of what they were then. It is under these circumstances when you find a difficulty in your way—and I do not for a moment diminish or extenuate the difficulty—that an extreme measure in restraint of liberty, and in augmentation of the stringency of the Criminal Law, first offers itself to your judgment and to your hands. Why is it that this has been the case? It has been because, in a certain sense—I am sorry to say a very qualified and partial sense, in a very chequered sense—the process of relief has been sadly intermittent. This period since 1832 has been the first period that any, even of the most sanguine and the mildest judges of Ireland, have been accustomed to recognise as the period of reparation or improvement in British legislation. I heard an hon. gentleman the other day, in an animated speech, say—“Surely we have had a long period of atonement and reconciliation” That was a speech made from that side of the House—“atonement and reconciliation.” What have been the “atonement and reconciliation”? Measures which your conscience has always compelled you to denounce. Such has been the general effect even during the whole of that long period of very partial measures of benevolence, very partial forms of amended procedure, on the part of the Imperial Parliament. Now, since the General Election of 1885, since the deliberate Constitutional declaration of the voice of Ireland, since the judgment of the bulk of the Liberal Party was passed upon that application, to the effect that it was safe and just and ought to be complied with, the attitude of the people of Ireland has been removed from crime and outrage in a degree never before known. Why has there been this severance between intimidation and the natural consequences of intimidation? Why have you totally failed to make good the proof which, in all other applications for coercive legislation, has been made in abundance before the House? Because the Irish people know that they had here a large, if an insufficiently large

body of men who had deliberately adopted their interests as the interests of the Nation and the Empire, and were ready to abide by them to the last. Consequently, sir, in my view, if we were to accede to the appeals made by the members of the Government and to adopt their language, we should do them no good; we should not only do ourselves, but them also, an infinity of harm; and I believe their first effect would be and must be a retrogression of the Irish people in the great social progress that they have, happily, made, an increase of the space they have yet to traverse before they arrive at a thoroughly satisfactory conclusion and a decided return towards a condition of things which, I rejoice to say, through our well-meant, even if partial efforts, has in great part passed away. We have upon us, in my opinion, a very great responsibility, because although we are a minority—and it is not the minority, but the majority which prevails—undoubtedly, I grant that—the numerical strength which we give to the opposition to this Bill renders it a more formidable opposition, and I will not affect the humility of denying that I believe it will carry very considerable—possibly more than very considerable—weight with large portions of the people of this country. I have a duty, as well as owning responsibility for others, to say exactly the same for myself and for all those who may be at all disposed to claim partnership with me or to give me the slightest portion of their confidence, and I say for myself and for any of them who allow me to speak for them, we have a power—greater or smaller—but a real power to assist the Irish people and to commend their case to the people of this country; but it is a power which depends upon their moderation and their legality. So long as we continue to find that the action we pursue has had the effect of depriving the Government of those materials of criminal statistics which in all other cases the Government have produced in order to obtain more stringent legislation, so long as we find that our course powerfully tends to produce this restraint of crime, so long, undoubtedly, we shall be bound and shall rejoice to see others persevering in it; and I trust that—be we few or many—and I believe we are many, and we shall be more—and

I believe that that belief of mine is shared by many men—not by all men—shared by many men who do not concur in our opinions,—with that belief we certainly, as I hope, shall resist this deplorable proposal, and shall still remain convinced that in resisting it, and in serving the cause of Ireland, we are still more essentially and effectually serving the cause of Britain and its world-wide Empire.

THE INCOME TAX, THE NATIONAL DEBT, AND THE SINKING FUND

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 25, 1887

The Budget was introduced on April 21st: the sum allotted for the annual reduction of the National Debt was reduced by two millions, and a penny taken off the Income Tax. The Budget Resolutions were agreed to.

I BELIEVE, Mr Courtney,¹ it will be agreeable to the general understanding of the House, that upon the present occasion Members should take the opportunity of expressing, with the advantage of two or three days of reflection, that which occurs to them upon a consideration of the financial proposals of the Government. I shall begin, sir, by confessing that I, for one, in common, I believe, with a good many hon. Members of this House—probably through my own fault—was under a complete mistake, not as to the fact that the financial proposals of the year were to be made known to us on Thursday last, but as to what the character of those financial proposals was likely to be. This entirely depended upon the construction or misconstruction which we put upon an epithet which the humility of my right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer² himself induced him to employ in describing them. It was well understood that my right hon. friend had stated that he intended to lay before the House a “Humdrum” Budget. We had to combine with that announcement the universal expectation, amounting almost to a knowledge, that there would be a moderate surplus—serving for unobtrusive and useful reductions as far as that surplus would permit; but that was, I admit, the whole extent of what I anticipated would be shown to the House on Thursday last. Instead of that, we had laid

¹ The Chairman of Committees.

² Mr. Goschen.

before us a Budget which, whether for good or for evil, will unquestionably, in my opinion, be remembered in future times, because it involves considerations, and proceeds upon principles which, at least, I say again, for good or for evil, entitle it to that distinction. Upon certain of those principles I have the misfortune to entertain strong opinions; but I bear in mind that we are now dealing with a Resolution, and that that Resolution is the first real stage in the proceedings upon the finances of the year. I conceive that there is no intention in any portion of the House to take issue upon any part of those proposals, so far as I know, during the discussion this evening; and I, therefore, regard this discussion as so far a preliminary proceeding. I am justified, and others will be justified, in stating opinions and impressions without reference to the terms in which they may think it their duty to pronounce an ultimate judgment, when the proceedings are further advanced, either on the Customs and Inland Revenue Bill, or the National Debt Bill, both of which, I presume, it will be necessary, in order to give effect to the views of the Government, to lay before the House. I feel that there is this great advantage in this state of facts—that it becomes practical, and I hope easy, to discuss these matters, even on the points where our impressions may not be favourable, in terms such as not to create any political difficulty between the different portions of the House with regard to treating them upon their merits. That is my sincere and exclusive desire; and, therefore, I shall certainly so far restrain the expression of my own opinions as to make it a capital object to avoid using any language with respect to any portion of the proposals which would constitute a difficulty of the nature to which I have referred. I am also, of course, aware that the proposals of the Government depend for their ultimate acceptance, not so much upon the Government themselves, not so much upon their supporters—although their supporters constitute a numerous body—as upon the views of certain hon. gentlemen sitting on this side of the House who have differed from us on the Irish Question. They are gentlemen who, if

these proposals of the Government be highly valuable and excellent, will be entitled to a great part of the merit, and who, if these proposals, or some of them, be the reverse of valuable or excellent, will, in my judgment, undoubtedly bear the principal responsibility.

The facts before us are simple enough. I need not follow the details, which were most proper for the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer to lay before the House. He starts, as I understand, with a surplus for the year 1886-7 of £767,000, and with an estimated surplus for the coming year of £975,000, which, by means of a minor—and I am inclined to believe a useful—change he intends to make in regard to the transfers of shares and stocks of companies, he intends to raise to £1,075,000. Not content with the opportunities which the possession of that comparatively moderate sum afford him, by one great stroke, the nature of which I will not even attempt to describe, he raises that surplus to what I may call the round sum of £2,800,000. The points before us are six. First are the minor changes, the most important of which, as I have already said, for my part, I am disposed to regard with favour, believing that it is sound in principle and will greatly facilitate financial transactions, while it is not unfavourable to the Exchequer. The second point is the Local Loans Budget; the third is the Tobacco Duty; the fourth is the Grant in Aid of an amount equal to the Carriage Tax for the purposes of roads; the fifth is the reduction of the Income Tax; and the sixth is the reduction of the Sinking Fund of £28,000,000 for the reduction of the National Debt.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,—With regard to the Carriage Tax, the total amount of the grants will be equal to the Carriage Tax. The amount now given is only one-half; and, by the proposal, it is doubled in the present year. As my right hon. friend has stated, the grant will be equivalent to the amount of the tax.

MR GLADSTONE,—I am obliged by the explanation of my right hon. friend, which will prevent any misapprehension arising from my imperfect statement. With regard to the

Local Loans Budget, I hope my right hon. friend will hereafter lay before us more fully the case—and an interesting and important case it is—for making the change he is about to introduce into our system. If I remember rightly, Sir Stafford Northcote¹ contemplated a change of this nature—to what extent it was to go I do not know—but, unquestionably, there are many considerations which tend to recommend it. I am afraid it will not be found so easy to obtain from this House a full and free discussion, while the present block of business continues, of local loans apart from the general finance of the country, at least not to an extent which, in the abstract, may be desirable. I wait, and give no unfavourable opinion, except to this extent—that I intend to express a misgiving, and even, perhaps, to offer a suggestion on a point which I understood from the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer is at present more or less open. We are told that the right hon. gentleman intends to create a stock of £37,000,000, and I understood, from an answer given by him, that that £37,000,000 was to be a 3 per cent. Stock to be put separately in the market, and to stand upon the same footing there as other Consols or New or Reduced Stock. I own I hope that a better arrangement than that may be found. It appears to me that, if there is to be a separate stock at all, it would be far better to make it a 2½ per cent. Stock, and to reinforce the 2½ per cents. now in the market than to take any other course. Above all, I think the creation of a new 3 per cent. Stock has this disadvantage—that unquestionably it would not possibly represent the public credit in so good, eligible, and cheap a form as the greater stocks that now exist. No one is better aware than the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer that even between the greater stocks that now exist there is a material distinction. There is a material difference between them; and the price of Consols, as Consols, is, I do not say invariably, a better price than is obtained for New 3 per cents. and the Reduced, while, on the other hand, it very frequently, though not invariably, happens that the

¹ Afterwards Earl of Iddesleigh, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1874-1880

price borne by the $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Stock is better than the price borne by any of the 3 per cents. I see no reason why that fact should not receive a full and impartial consideration from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I must say, whether I agree with or differ from the final determination of the right hon. gentleman on this point, I think I ought to congratulate the country on having for the first time, I believe, a Chancellor of the Exchequer to manage its finance, who is himself the author not only of a work, but of a standard and classical work,¹ on one of the most complicated branches of monetary science.

I pass on to the question of the Tobacco Duty, and upon that point I will not detain the House for any length of time. I am sorry to find that the proposal of the right hon. gentleman, if it be a right proposal—and I am very far from being prepared to say it is otherwise than right—is a condemnation of the experiment which was made about 1878 under the Government of Lord Beaconsfield. Plainly, if we are now to repeal this 4d. which was added to the Tobacco Duty, the conclusion is inevitable that it was a mistake to make the addition. I am afraid that may not be all. There is no question at all that the addition of 4d. has led to considerable adulteration of tobacco, using the word “adulteration” in the approved technical sense—the addition of material which, whether it be good or bad, is legitimately considered as making a factitious and unreal addition to the commodity to which it is added. No doubt there must be much more water in the tobacco the people smoke now than there used to be before the water was added when the duty was raised by the Government of Lord Beaconsfield; and it is not unnatural, therefore, for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to repeal the addition in the hope of getting rid of the water; but I suspect it is much easier to repeal the addition than it may be to get rid of the water. For my part I have not any great faith in the operation of the prohibition. No doubt, if it can be enforced it is good, thoroughly good; but if it cannot be enforced, then there only remains the hope that the competition of trade may suf-

¹ *The Theory of Foreign Exchanges.*

fice to bring down to the lowest point the profit necessary for carrying on the trade; and, if so, a sounder article will be got by the consumer than was supplied to him while the additional duty was imposed. But so much depends upon the manner in which trade is organised and upon the concentration of interests and communication upon trade questions which prevails at headquarters, that I confess I do not feel confident, although I am far from saying that it may not be right to make the reduction, that the benefits of that reduction will so far reach the consumer as to place him in the position in which he stood before the additional duty was made.

I take next the sum of £280,000 for England in aid of local burdens, together with the £50,000 for Scotland, etc.—a somewhat different allocation for Ireland—which is to be awarded to the Local Authorities in respect of the Carriage Tax. I confess, sir, I deeply regret this proceeding on the part of the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If we were discussing the matter in a party sense, it might be said, and said with truth, that this is only a precise repetition of what was done by a Government which I had the honour to be connected with. That is perfectly true; but we never concealed or made any scruple of acknowledging that in making that proposal we simply submitted to the will—what we thought the imperious will, but the manifest and determined will—of the House of Commons, and we made the best terms we could for the public. We never pretended that we approved of the step, but we chose the less in preference to the greater evil. We could not have broken up the Government on such a question. On the other hand, the House of Commons would never for a moment have acquiesced in anything less than we proposed, and it was all we could do to prevent the expansion of that compulsion to a much greater length. I shall discuss this matter, not at great length, but with perfect freedom. I may say that I agree in everything which I understand to have been said on the subject by the noble Lord the Member for South Paddington.¹ The objections to this form

Lord Randolph Churchill.

of proceedings are strong and manifest. I say that, not at all because I think the position of the ratepayer deserves no commiseration and no relief. The position of the ratepayer is a cruel position. He is ground between the upper and the nether millstone. The occupier in this country—using that term as synonymous with ratepayer—is undoubtedly under covenants which largely and properly bind him to meet the charge of the rates, whatever they may be. But when that fashion of agreement came into force, and that liability was laid upon the occupier, the rates were for certain limited and narrow purposes, and the occupier knew what he was about. But what has happened within the last twenty or thirty years? A completely new set of economic and social wants have come into play, and great additions have been made to the public requirements. I assume that, for the most part, they have been wisely made. But what I say is that the greater part of the burden has been laid upon the occupier of the soil, whereas the ultimate benefit has gone almost entirely to the owner of the soil. The owner of the soil and the owner of houses is the person who will get a better rent in consequence of having better water and better drainage, and better applications of other kinds now provided for the rates; so that one set of people are called upon to pay for the improvements, and receive a short and temporary benefit, while another set of people get the whole of the permanent advantage. That is gross injustice. It will be necessary, therefore, to take into consideration not only the relation between realty and personal property, but also the relation between the position of owner and the position of occupier.

I do not speak of it as a matter altogether easy to handle. But still, in the case of the Income Tax, you have devised machinery by which it would be vain for the landlord to try to lay on the tenant, or the house owner, or the occupier the burden of the Income Tax. I do not at all say that it may not be the duty of the House to do something in mitigation of the very great hardship which is thrown on the occupier in relation to the owner. And what are all these Grants in Aid? No doubt

they give an immediate solace to the occupier, but he does not find in them all the relief he ought to get, because they are opposed to economy and strict administration. Therefore, it is but a limited benefit compared to the benefit which the money ought to produce. No matter whether rents are rising or falling, upon the next adjustment the rates are calculated with the grants taken into account, and the landlord gets so much the more rent in consequence of the grants. These are very grave differences. You pretend by these Grants in Aid to rectify the inequality which undoubtedly exists at present between different kinds of property. That is true; but you are aggravating whatever exists between property and labour, because you are taking off a portion of the burden which ought to be borne by the fund supported in the main by property, and you lay it on the Consolidated Fund, which is to a preponderating degree supported by labour. You are applying a remedy to an evil which you do not cure or remove. You are introducing a new form of inequality, unjust, as I think, and which will always continue unjust to the people at large.

But there was the objection stated by the noble Lord the Member for South Paddington, and it is the greatest of all, if it is not a conclusive objection. These grants of money are now given in the worst and most exceptional way, and do not, it is admitted, bear any certain relation to the substantial claims of the occupier of land and houses. But what you have in view, as is admitted on all hands, is a great and stringent reform of local government; and that great and stringent reform of local government necessarily treads on the toes of many persons and classes. Such a measure is not to be propelled by any lively or active movement of public opinion, while it is certain to be resisted by a great *vis inertiae*, a great force of private prejudices and interests, which, except by a powerful leverage, you cannot hope to overcome. How does the case stand? It is just this. When the question of local government reform came first to be seriously discussed—when the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself introduced

a large and comprehensive measure¹ on the subject—at that time the system of Grants in Aid was comparatively contracted, and we had in our hands a very large fund; which fund was the operative instrument by means of which we could hope to overcome the resistance to a good system of local government, and smooth the way to its attainment. What have we been doing since? What was done in 1814? The fund was given away piece by piece, and every piece you gave away so far weakened your means of action in regard to procuring any effective reform of local government. That is most unsatisfactory, and I must confess that it does appear to me a matter of regret that the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Cabinet, with greater power to give effect to his own views than any Chancellor of the Exchequer who ever sat on that bench during my recollection, and from circumstances which are by no means dishonourable to him—I say that it is a matter of regret that the right hon. gentleman, without any pressure from the House, or any necessity that I can conceive, should be disposed to continue this exceptional system, and to weaken the ground on which he and those who act with him stand in the House, for asking Parliament for an efficient reform of the system of local government.

Then I come to the Income Tax. We are to have the Income Tax reduced by 1d. I may say that that is a pecuniary boon to every one of us. The right hon. gentleman is going to put into the pockets of each of us so many pounds. He is going to make us not a Christmas-box, but a sort of Whitsun-box—or rather an Easter offering, an Easter due in the shape of so many pounds apiece. I admit that an Income Tax of 8d. is an Income Tax at a discreditable high rate for a time like this, when we have upon us no enormous pressure of burdens and no foreign complications—being happily relieved either wholly or partially from those under which a few years ago we were labouring. How ought the Income Tax to be reduced? The tax was put on to meet the growth and the high excess of expenditure. I contend that the Income Tax ought to be

¹ The Local Government and Taxation Bill, 1871.

reduced as it has been reduced in former years, not by a resort to sources which I, for one, do not think legitimate, but that it ought to be reduced by a wholesome and sound process of public economy. The right hon. gentleman has given us upon the subject of public economy many excellent and useful declarations, but at the same time he will admit that by the Budget and the measures he proposes economy is not promoted. I am not prepared to admit that the reduction of the Income Tax by the appropriation of another public fund, without reduction of expenditure, is a proceeding which ought to be approved. No doubt, it is not an agreeable thing to have this 8d. Income Tax. When we made great reductions of the Income Tax before, in 1860-1 and in 1866, they were made in a steady and regular progress of economy. That was before the time when the Revenue exhibited an extraordinary elasticity; indeed, it was at the time when we were suffering extreme pressure from the effects of the cotton famine in Lancashire. But we did continue to keep down the Income Tax by economy, and I must press upon the House that that is what ought to be done now. We now pay an Income Tax of 8d. in the pound, being a far richer people than we were at the time when Sir Robert Peel proposed in a landlords' Parliament—for it was much more of a landlords' Parliament than the present one—when Sir Robert Peel induced the landlords' Parliament to lay on the Income Tax¹ expressly for the purpose of relieving the burdens of the people while commercial and financial reforms were being effected. That tax was borne for nearly twenty years at either 7d. or over in the pound, for the purpose of meeting an excess of expenditure. For one or two years it went down to 3d.; but it was borne for more than twenty years almost for the whole time at 7d. or upwards. I must say that there is something repellent to the mind that, having accepted an 8d. Income Tax for the purpose of meeting an excess of expenditure, we should now be content to leave that excess of expenditure untouched, and yet to retain our claim for the reduction of the Income

¹ In 1842.

Tax, which was expressly put on for the purpose of meeting that excess of expenditure.

I am entirely for the reduction of the Income Tax; but I now come to a question which is vital, and which lies at the root of the whole subject. The matter is so large that it absorbs and eclipses all the other proposals of the Budget—namely, whether the proposed reduction of the Income Tax is brought about by legitimate means. In regard to this part of the subject, I desire to avoid language that may appear to imply censure, or to be dictated by political prejudice or bias. Still, I do submit to the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the proposals of the Budget bearing upon this matter are not conformable to the principles of sound finance.

What are those principles of sound finance? We must always bear in mind how large and comprehensive they are. Some people appear to suppose that public economy is the only principle of sound finance. I admit that public economy is a matter of first importance; but it is not the only principle of sound finance. Without an adherence to that principle, it is extremely unlikely that you will be able steadily to maintain your adherence to any other principle. There are other principles of the greatest importance. The first of these principles is that the Revenue and Expenditure should balance together year by year. Against that principle there is no offence in the Budget, provided only that you secure that the balance to the credit side is obtained by legitimate means. Another principle that should be borne in mind, and one which is not likely to be observed in the present case, is that the real control of the House of Commons upon Public Expenditure depends upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer presenting one Budget in the year, instead of a number of successive Budgets being presented in each year. That is sometimes excusable, and even necessary and inevitable. In all cases it is a misfortune, and it has a tendency to destroy the control of the House of Commons over the expenditure. In regard, sir, to that control, I

wish it were very different from what it is. It may be doubtful, in the eyes of an impartial reasoner, whether, on the whole, the Expenditure of this country would have been greater or less during the last thirty years if the House of Commons had never meddled with it at all; and if the entire responsibility for the Public Expenditure had been thrown upon the Government, without any money being voted by the House at all. It sounds like a very great paradox that I am attempting to give utterance to; but a paradoxical form sometimes secures attention for a truth which would otherwise be considered extremely dull and uninteresting, and would receive no attention at all. That is a shocking thing to say, and if that utterance is true it is a dreadful thing to say, that the action of the Representatives of the people, with regard to Public Expenditure, has now reached a point when it tends to augment instead of to restrain expenditure. But there is great reason to fear that it is the case. I venture to say that one of the greatest financial difficulties of a Government, and that which is the least popular part of their duty, is to propose to repress and to restrain to the utmost the efforts which are constantly being made by different sections of the House of Commons to press for an increase in the Public Expenditure for the promotion of their own favourite ideas.

Then comes the last of all these principles—and that is the duty of operating steadily for the redemption of the National Debt. This principle is, in one respect, the most important of all; because it is the one which is most exclusively in the charge of the Executive Government. By ceasing to redeem the Debt the Executive Government can, at any time, repeal taxes; and a proposition by the Executive Government to repeal taxes is one which the House of Commons is almost bound to accept. The House of Commons has no right to impose taxes upon the people except upon the invitation of the Executive Government, who are the defenders of the public Exchequer. If the Executive Government decline to discharge the duties of the championship, it is not for the House of Commons to oppose their action, and there-

fore they cannot resist the request of the Executive Government to take taxes off. At all times since the present Parliamentary system was established, there has been a sense of the duty and necessity of endeavouring to reduce and cut down the debt in times of peace. When the first National Debt was in its cradle, no one would lend money to the State unless there was an allocation of a portion of the money lent, for the purpose of the redemption of the capital. That was something in the nature of a Sinking Fund. The name of Sir Robert Walpole is closely associated with the Sinking Fund, and, apparently, at one time he thought his fame, in a large degree, would depend upon his measures for the reduction of Debt. Then came Mr. Pitt, the great Finance Minister, who, had he continued to be the Minister of Peace, would probably have been the greatest Finance Minister this country has ever seen; and so much did he feel the duty and the necessity of decreasing the National Debt that he arranged a complex Sinking Fund, although he must have known of its defects and inconveniences, for the purposes for which it was introduced. That Sinking Fund of Mr. Pitt was the subject of discussion down to the time when Mr. Goulburn was Chancellor of the Exchequer;¹ but about the epoch of the Reform Bill the Government adopted the principle that it would look only to annual surplus for the payment of the Debt, because it found that whenever a Sinking Fund had been established it had not been able to keep the hands of Parliament from invading it. At the same time, the Government did continue to pay off Debt in the shape of Terminable Annuities, although they declined to appropriate a given sum for the regular redemption of Debt.

And now, sir, I wish to call attention to this fact, that the objections which used to be taken to the allocation of a large given sum to the redemption of the Debt—so far as these objections were of an economic character—have completely disappeared. The reason of these objections was twofold. Under the old system we provided that a certain

¹ 1841-46.

amount of stock should be regularly redeemed in the market from the very time of borrowing, and that redemption of stock went on under the old lines while we were borrowing money for loans, and the effect was to lead to a large waste of public money by the double action. Nothing from an economic point of view could be more indefensible. We had also a very large amount of Terminable Annuities, and they were continually dealt in by the Government as buyers and sellers in the open market; but the effect of dealing with those commodities in that manner was to lower and depreciate the public credit. Seeing that when they were sold the buyer obtained a higher rate of interest, there were exceedingly grave objections to the old Sinking Fund and the old method of dealing with Terminable Annuities. Those objections have now completely disappeared. We now never buy and sell stock in the same market. We now never send into the public market annuities to be sold on the public account. Annuities are created, and have become most powerful instruments both for keeping the Exchequer in funds, and likewise for operating in connection with the reduction of debt. But these annuities are in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is the seller on the one hand and the buyer on the other. They never touch the market, and the rate of interest fixed is purely a matter of computation on his part. It has become one of mere account in the books, and the country does not lose a single farthing by the tolerably effective system of operations for the reduction of the National Debt.

But still there remains one principle of importance in connection with the Sinking Fund which constituted a difficulty, and that was that the principle which was abandoned about the epoch of the Reform Bill, and which was revived by Sir George Lewis¹ in 1855 or 1856. Sir George Lewis was making a loan for the purposes of the Crimean War, and in that loan he inserted a clause which provided, if I remember the sum aright, that £1,500,000 a year should be regularly paid out of the Consolidated Fund—in respect of that

¹ Then Chancellor of the Exchequer.

loan—towards the redemption of stock. I was one who, in company with the rest of those who were the followers of Sir Robert Peel, and in company also with the Tory Opposition of that day, objected to the plan of Sir George Lewis. But we objected to it on the ground that the payment would never be made—that is to say, that on the first occasion when it was convenient this clause would be evaded or repealed. But Sir George Lewis, in the year 1855, carried his Act of Parliament, with the clause in it providing for the payment of £1,500,000 a year. Mr. Disraeli was Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1858, and he found that he could not afford to pay this sum without imposing taxes in order to defray it. He thought that was unreasonable, and Sir George Lewis's Sinking Fund, after a brief and somewhat inglorious existence of two years, was repealed. Then came the Sinking Fund of Sir Stafford Northcote. We opposed that Sinking Fund of Sir Stafford Northcote entirely upon the ground that it was not desirable to hold out to the country promises and assurances of the redemption of the Debt which experience proved would not become a permanent reality. We were entirely, at that time as much as now, in favour of the annual redemption of the Debt. I believe I may say, as I was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time—although I say it without any personal vanity—that the Government from 1868 to 1874 redeemed a greater amount of the National Debt, by means of its surpluses and annuities, than ever was redeemed within an equal number of years. Sir Stafford Northcote undertook—what was considered somewhat bold—to induce Parliament to appropriate £28,000,000 a year to the redemption of the Debt. Our question with him was entirely upon the form, and our objection was that his good intentions would be interfered with by circumstances. When we came into office we did our best to maintain his Sinking Fund, and we never interfered with the Sinking Fund of Sir Stafford Northcote except for a course which I will mention, and within certain limits.

That is the question of the creation of the Sinking Fund, and a rough, rude outline, but I believe a fair outline, of

the position in which it stood before the country. We are now asked to invade—or, if the term invade appear sharpened—we are asked to diminish the Sinking Fund, and to reduce it in round numbers from £7,000,000 to £5,000,000 a year. Now, permit me just to make this first observation, which I really hope may touch the minds of all those hon. members in this House who have Conservative opinions in the sense of being desirous to maintain those principles and usages which have been applied at former times by persons of the highest authority, and which have been approved by the country and by the House, with happy results. We are now going to reduce, if the proposal stands as it now stands—and I sincerely trust that Her Majesty's Government may be induced to change it—we are now going to reduce the total annual provision for the reduction of the National Debt to a point lower than the lowest point at which it has stood in the recollection of any of those 'who hear me. When I speak of the reduction of the National Debt, I include the interest also, and refer to the total sum applicable for the purposes of the Debt. That total sum applicable for the purposes of the Debt we are now invited to say that we cannot bear—we in this country, with an estimated income of something like £1,000,000,000 a year,—cannot bear to apply to dealing with our National Debt in the form of provision for annual interest and effectual reduction a sum nearly so large as was applied to that same purpose in the year 1860, when the wealth of the country was not, I think, more than two-thirds of what it now is. An income of £900,000,000 or £1,000,000,000 a year refuses to apply to dealing with the Debt, and relieving and providing for the future, as prudent men ought to do, more than, I think, between £25,000,000 and £26,000,000 a year; whereas, in the year 1860, that provision, unless I am much mistaken, came to £28,000,000 a year. Is that a proposal worthy of the present Conservative Ministry? I say worthy, but I do not want to use a word that can by any means be used as a term of censure—even by implication—is it congenial to Conservative

tradition? Who are the Conservative financiers whose proposals are favoured and cherished in connection with Conservative recollections? Is this a proposal that Mr. Pitt would have approved? Is this a proposal that Sir Robert Peel would have approved? Whatever may be said in other respects, I have never heard that the finance of Sir Robert Peel between 1841 and 1846 was deemed anything else but an honour and a credit to the Conservative Party. I myself am convinced that serious, reflective, and sober-minded men, in this determination to stint the means applicable to the payment of the Debt in the view of not only what is called relieving posterity, but with the view of making provision for a rainy day, and enlarging your means and resources for great expenditure when the necessity for great expenditure arises—I cannot think that serious and deliberate reflection will warrant a proceeding so inadequately corresponding to the courageous tradition of Englishmen, to the far-sighted tradition of English statesmen, or to the general interests of the British nation.

I now wish to bring to the notice of the House—and especially to the notice of the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer—this proposition which I am now going to utter. I will not utter it as if I were absolutely certain of its truth; but it is true so far as my knowledge goes—it is true so far as the recollection of between 50 and 60 years goes—and I believe it is true so far as the entire century is concerned. My proposition is this, that no reduction has ever been proposed to the Sinking Fund of the National Debt corresponding in principle with the reduction now suggested by the Government. Now, let us see whether, so far as we know, that proposition is true or not. I cast aside entirely the idea that the sum of £7,000,000 now applied to the reduction of Debt is an enormous, extravagant, and unbearable sum. I do not hesitate to say that in my opinion, whatever that may be worth, it is an inadequate sum, and that with the wealth of this country we ought to do more in the reduction of Debt from year to year. It is not felt by the country, it is not complained of by the country as an inadequate sum; there is no tendency

in the present day to raise an outcry of its intolerable severity, and requiring us to do what I admit we might be compelled to do under pressure and in deference to such an outcry; but on the contrary, it is regarded as a wise, provident, fruitful, and truly thrifty system. What has been done has been done in three forms, or at least has been done in two forms, and is now proposed to be done in a third form if the hearts of the Government are so flinty that they cannot be induced to reflect, or if nobody on this side will assist that reflection—as I sometimes hope my noble friend the Member for Rossendale¹ may possibly be inclined to do, if I can convey the necessity of it to his mind. What has been done I say is now proposed to be done by a third form of interference with the Redemption Fund.

Now the form of warrantable interference with the Redemption Fund is that upon which Parliament, upon our instance, acted a few years ago, and, I think, to a limited extent, one year ago. If a very large demand for a sudden expenditure arises, and in the exigencies of a great Empire such demands may be expected to arise from time to time, then a bold and a just Government will persuade Parliament as far as possible—as far as reason and courage will go together hand in hand—to meet that demand by taxation. But it cannot go to all lengths for that purpose. The derangement of your fiscal system by the attempt to meet every demand upon the year by the taxes of the year would be such that, upon the whole, more rashness than wisdom would be evinced by such a course. Although you go as far possible to meet the demands upon the year by the taxes of the year, yet some accommodation you must grant in order to meet the general working of your system, and such accommodation has been made from time to time. It was made by us, and very much more largely by Sir Stafford Northcote himself; but it was always in order to meet large excesses of expenditure to which Parliament had given its sanction. I thought, myself, that the Government of Lord Beaconsfield did not go

¹ The Marquis of Hartington.

nearly far enough in meeting that expenditure by taxation. I thought we went as far as we could—as far as we thought safe; but that is not the question. I want to point out to the Committee that the invasions of the Fund for the Redemption of the National Debt have been founded on those large and sudden demands for additional expenditure. Those I call, in principle, warrantable invasions of the Fund. That is one kind of proceeding in derogation of the principle of the annual allocation for the redemption of the National Debt.

The second is that of which Mr. Disraeli's Government gave an example in 1858. In 1858 there was no large and sudden demand for public expenditure; but Mr. Disraeli's Government had taken office under pressure, and its influence in the House of Commons was not commanding. There was no large section of the Opposition prepared to carry it through thick and thin for the purpose of a policy which they deemed to be so paramount as to require the adoption of that course. But Mr. Disraeli found himself in this condition—that he must either lay on additional taxes, or else he must get rid of the Sinking Fund established by Sir George Lewis at £1,500,000 a year. He chose the latter alternative. I did not blame him at the time, and I do not blame him now. It would have been difficult even for a much stronger Government at the time to have laid on additional taxes. But it is a questionable proceeding, and I am not sure that he ought not to have sacrificed himself on the altar of duty with the stern resolution of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer the noble Lord the Member for South Paddington in the month of January last. I say so in all truth and sincerity, because no one has heard me speak of the noble Lord's views upon finance, as far as I know them, except in terms of sympathy and respect. I do not say that Mr. Disraeli's proposal¹ in 1858 was as magnanimous and as chivalrous as it ought to have been; but there are these two things to be said. First of all, he had strongly opposed the

¹ "He proposed that the War Sinking-Fund Act should be repealed, or at least suspended until the Exchequer bonds were provided for, and he proposed to postpone until 1862 and 1863 the payment of these bonds."—*Annual Register*, 1858.

creation of the Sinking Fund, and he was in a position of perfect consistency that justified him in moving its abrogation; and, secondly, no alternative was before him except the imposition of taxes. Therefore, whether he was right or wrong—and it is open to argument—Mr. Disraeli's case stands in a position entirely different from the case of the Government now before us. This is, I believe, the first proposal in our history, when we have become a richer people than we ever were before—because I am certain that the right hon. gentleman will not deny that, after all allowances for depreciation of land, for depreciation of farming stock, it is the fact that the accumulations of this country continue to increase—I do not believe he will be of opinion that in any of the years we have been passing through, less than £100,000,000 have been added to the savings of the country—in most of those years much more than £100,000,000 have been added—and it is in these circumstances that we are invited to shrink from the very moderate efforts we have been making in order to pursue this wise and broad policy, supported by all our best financial authorities, of applying considerable and sensible amounts to the reduction of the National Debt.

The last stroke in the case is this. It is a case of *Et tu Brute*. The Sinking Fund of Sir Stafford Northcote is going to be invaded by the representatives of Sir Stafford Northcote, by the men of his party—nay, in a large majority, I believe, by the individuals who were his colleagues, and who induced Parliament to establish that Sinking Fund. Is it possible to dwell, as the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer is inclined to dwell, on such a doctrine as that to exact an excessive payment in reduction of the National Debt is to endanger the principle of reduction altogether? Surely, sir—and I hope it will not be deemed offensive if I say it—it is a fanciful doctrine ingeniously concocted to meet a case. Is this £7,000,000 a year an exaggerated sum? I say that it ought not only not to endanger the principle, but that *de facto* it is not endangering the principle. There has been no movement of the public

mind against it. What is it the right hon. gentleman proposes to do? He is not doing it in obedience to any public demand; he is doing it certainly in derogation of the act of his own predecessor in the party with which he is at present co-operating, and with which, I presume, he will continue to co-operate, and by the side of men who were in the Cabinet that established this Sinking Fund. The right hon. gentleman says—"Let us reduce the Sinking Fund to a moderate amount, and then it will be safe." What is a moderate amount? Has the right hon. gentleman anything to go by for fixing the moderation of the amount, except his own private judgment? If one Chancellor of the Exchequer may seek to make the reduction of the Sinking Fund from £7,000,000 to £5,000,000, in order to relieve the payers of Income Tax, why is not another Chancellor of the Exchequer entitled to say £5,000,000 is really too much in the present dead state of trade?—"I ask you to reduce it to £4,000,000 or £3,000,000, and I point out to you the enormous advantage you may confer by it;" ay, and possibly he might point out a much stronger case for the reduction of taxes than the right hon. gentleman. If he were of another school of politics, very likely he may go to some of those indirect taxes that press on the industry of the country, or on the price of articles largely consumed by the people.

I have refrained altogether from the use of any strong language. I do not wish to infuse an element of that kind into the debate. I see the right hon. gentleman moving as if he were about to speak. I am very sorry if it is so, because what I hope is that he will give the House—having already explained his proposals—an opportunity of hearing at large an expression of impartial opinion, an expression of friendly opinion—an expression of opinion friendly to him from behind me, and an expression of opinion, if possible, still more friendly from the benches opposite. I ask him—and I do not think it is too much to ask—a candid and unprejudiced consideration of this case at a time when it has been mixed up with no political or party element. I ask him to read the lesson of former finance, and to assign reasonable weight to the great authorities who have

provided rules of guidance for the country on that great subject; to remember how in finance, beyond all other things, it is the beginnings of evil that are insidious, and that are really dangerous; how the wise, prudent man should be on his guard not to admit those beginnings, but to bear in mind the admirable feeling and judgment of the country, which has completely recognised and approved this method of reasonable effort for the reduction of the Debt, and to come to his just and impartial conclusion in the light which history and policy will alike afford him.

WELSH AND IRISH NATIONALITY

SWANSEA, JUNE 4, 1887

Mr. Gladstone addressed a great gathering in the grounds of Singleton Abbey, where he was the guest of Sir Hussey Vivian (afterwards Lord Swansea). On the same day he spoke after dinner at the same place (see the next speech): the next day he opened the Free Library at Swansea, and made a speech. On the 8th he spoke at Cardiff and Newport on the Irish question.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I shall not be accused of exaggeration when I say that we have witnessed to-day a wonderful and eventful sight. It was wonderful from the magnitude of what we have seen. The bands and banners even taken by themselves would have furnished material for a glowing description, especially when we select for commendation that one banner upon which was written in words of eloquence and truth, "Communion of hearts, not manacles." But that was a remarkable procession for the human figures of which it was composed, and for the human hearts that glowed within every one of those figures; hearts stirred with deep emotion; age and maturity and youth were there, men and women and childhood were there, and even, ladies and gentlemen, not a few South Wales babies have had a chance of receiving to-day their first impression. Those hearts glowed, and why? Because they know that we have met upon a great and, I may say in Wales, a glorious occasion. This occasion is at once Imperial, Irish, and Welsh. It is Imperial because the character and the honour of the Empire require that an end shall be put to these painful relations between England and Ireland which for generations—ay, I grieve to say, for centuries—have shocked the feelings and judgment of the whole civilised world. It is Irish because Ireland is a country that has the deepest and most immediate interest of all in your

proceedings, as their object is to restore the basis of social order and to bring the feelings of the people into harmony with the action of the law.

Gentlemen, it is also, let me say, Welsh in two points of view. First of all, I cannot express the satisfaction with which I observed that in this country of Wales—perhaps the most Protestant in the whole world—in this country of Wales, beyond England, beyond even Scotland, and equally beyond Ireland herself, as attested by the representation of the country, there is a firm determination on the part of Protestant Wales to do justice, nothing less than justice, and full justice, to Roman Catholic Ireland. Because Protestant Wales has learnt this lesson at least—that Christianity is a mockery which only enhances responsibility and shame unless it teaches us this first lesson of our blessed Saviour in whom we all believe—that we should do to others as we would that they should do to us, and that if in anything they differ from us, that is not a reason for less, but a reason for more regard to their interest and desires, lest perchance those differences should mislead our judgments and should alienate our hearts.

Well, but this is a Welsh occasion in another sense, and the Irish friends whom I am so delighted to see here to-day, in common with you all, will feel that the part to be played by Wales at the present time is rather a peculiar part, especially when it is borne in mind that there are a great number of people in England—I hope none in Wales—but there are a certain number in England who do not understand that Wales is anything more than a geographical expression, a celebrated phrase which Prince Metternich, a very famous man, once applied to Italy; but in the course of time he found that Italy was more than a geographical expression, and that it was destined in the counsels of Providence to become a great political reality and a powerful factor in the European system. Well, gentlemen, this is a serious question for you to consider—on which I for one have a strong opinion—whether Wales is a nationality or not. I hold in my hand one of your addresses in which it is said—and it is said in many of them—“belonging

as we do to the separate"—that is, a distinct, nationality. Now that does not mean disunion from England. It means closer union with England. It is the recognition of the distinctive qualities and the separate parts of great countries and empires which constitutes the true basis of union, and to attempt to centralise them by destroying those local peculiarities is the shallowest philosophy and the worst possible of all practical blunders. It is a mode at once to destroy strength, and to impair and break up union. Well, shall I be permitted to refer to a few of those signs which show whether Wales is a nationality or not, or whether it ever had a nationality? I want to know, gentlemen, what are all these castles in Wales? How in the world were they planted there? Did they tumble from the sky? or did somebody build them? Well, I believe it is understood that England built them, and that there are a great many of them. I believe that Mr Pennant, a careful antiquary, estimates the number at 161, and there is a greater number of castellated remains in and around little Wales than in all the rest of England put together. Now, how came they about? If, gentlemen, they did not build castles round Yorkshire or Lancashire, but in Wales, there was that which we call a separate nationality, and this nationality, notwithstanding the enormous superiority of England in numbers and force, this nationality could not then be controlled except by building this multitude of castles. Well, it appears to me that it looks rather as if there were in that day a nationality in Wales. I rejoice to know that Wales is not now controlled by castles. There is no part of the world in which you can better allow the castle to crumble and decay (though I am glad you preserve them for the love of antiquity), in which you can so safely allow them to crumble and decay as in Wales. I may almost say that not only is Wales not controlled by castles, but it is not controlled by police constables. They are a most useful and valuable class; we have had their assistance in our peaceful and pleasant operations to-day. But if any part of the country could dispense even with police constables, that part would be Wales.

Well, now let me mention another point. It is familiar to all your minds. Wales had a separate Church from England, and the greatest ornaments of that Church, whom we call saints, were in Wales a separate set from the English saints, and the English know nothing about the Welsh saints. If you tell them the names of Welsh saints, you may as well speak Greek or Sanscrit. They know nothing about St. Iltid, St. Tilo, St. Tidno, and nothing about a saint who gave his name to our parish church in Hawarden—viz., St. Di. But I will not go any further for fear I should come to grief. I refer to them for an historical purpose, to show how absurd it is to deny this nationality of Wales—this nationality of Wales which, so far from disuniting it from England, fits it to be united more closely and for ever, as I hope, to England, constituting a yet more healthy and more vigorous part of the general constitution of the country. The English knew the Welsh had a nationality a good while after the Welsh Church was incorporated with the English Church. That came long after the foundation¹ of the See of Canterbury and St. Augustine. The Welsh Church existed long before Canterbury was founded. The Welsh Church sent bishops and monks to confer with the envoys of St. Augustine when he came to England. When we come to the Middle Ages, I am sorry to say the English recognised the Welsh nationality in a very disagreeable manner, for a very vast amount of the Church property was plundered out of Wales in order to enrich the Chapter of Oxford, the Chapter of Gloucester, and various other chapters. I take it that was not by accident. When the English took the Welsh Church property to enrich the chapters they knew very well what they were about, and probably they were considerably encouraged and assisted in that operation by these castles to which I have been referring. I am happy to think that after that there came a happier recognition of the Welsh nationality. When the Tudor Sovereigns came to the Throne the Welsh filled a most important part in English history. They were a strong, stern,

¹ 597 A.D.

masculine race. There is much to be said about them, for and against; but there is this to be said, that they never forgot their Welsh blood. During the time of the Tudors Wales had justice from the Government of the country. I may mention to you, as one indication of it, that in Wales in the latter part of the reign of Queen Elizabeth you had prepared for you, and presented to you, that admirable translation of the Bible which you still use and republish from time to time, long before—at least twenty or thirty years, I should say, before—the English translation of the Bible was finally satisfactorily accomplished.

Now, gentlemen, so much for Welsh nationality. I affirm that Welsh nationality is as great a reality as English nationality. It may not be as big a reality, in that it does not extend over so large a country, but with the traditions and history of Wales, with the language of Wales, with the religion of Wales, with the feelings of Wales, with the intention and determination of Wales, I maintain that the Welsh nationality is as true as the nationality of Scotland, to which by blood I exclusively belong. That reminds me that I have a little title—it is only a modern title, it has existed within a month for forty-eight years—to speak in a certain sense as a kind of Welshman. Wales is not only a nationality, it has grievances. I am not going to compare the grievances of Wales, or I would rather venture to call them inconveniences, with the grievances of Ireland. I am not going to compare the relations between England and Wales with the deplorable, disgraceful, shocking, and revolting history of the relations between England and Ireland. Gentlemen, our object is the object which lies nearest my heart as an Englishman by birth, who has lived in England and wrought and laboured for England through a long life. I am anxious to put an end to the sores of Ireland, and to bring her people and her laws into a regular and normal state if possible. I am anxious to live to see the day—if God should grant me that enormous favour—when the deepest stain on the English character and the English reputation will be removed by the final work of doing justice to Ireland. The inconveniences of

Wales have arisen in this way—which does very often happen in political life—that Wales does not receive sufficient attention because she has been too patient and too silent. Wales has not told her own tale. Under the old franchise Wales did not get the right kind of men in Parliament, as was the case with Ireland until after the Roman Catholic emancipation, or that epoch when the true representation of Ireland in the English Parliament began. Wales has been too silent. You have all good voices, or happily you have all got musical voices. I do not ask you to sing to the British Parliament, as you were good enough to do for us last night, and as you have done to-day under the guidance of Mr Abraham,¹ but I would remind you that it is time your representatives should, in moderation, and subject to the claims of Imperial patriotism, lay their Welsh heads together and consider what are the fair claims of Wales, because I am not going to dwell on Welsh questions now further than to say I am very well aware that there are Welsh questions in which you are deeply and profoundly interested, and what I wish is that as far as those questions are settled they shall be settled in accordance with the interests of Wales, and those interests shall be judged mainly according to the views of the people of Wales. The people of Wales may make mistakes in judging of their own interests, but they are more likely to judge well of their own interests than the people in England, who know little or nothing about them. That is the case in Ireland, and that is the case in Wales.

You are very anxious, many of you, most of those I am addressing, regarding what is called the question of Disestablishment. Well, gentlemen, I have had a hand in a piece of disestablishment myself, and I am going to be very stinted and jejune indeed on this subject with you. I am going to allude to what I call the Hartingtonian principle. Perhaps you will ask me what that is. I will tell you. When Lord Hartington was a leader of the Liberal party in the time of the Beaconsfield Ministry he went into Scotland,² and went there, I

¹ Member for the Rhondda Division of Glamorgan, known as "Mabon."

² See vol. x. p. 192.

presume to think, for a more useful purpose than he has gone there for once or twice recently. Lord Hartington was asked about Disestablishment in Scotland, and said that the question whether there should continue to be an established Church in Scotland ought to be according to the views of the Scotch. That is what I call the Hartingtonian principle, and I am thoroughly Hartingtonian in the adoption of that principle, whether it be England or Scotland, or whether it be Wales. I am happy to say with regard to Ireland that we have no longer the question arising of whether it is according to the views and affections of the people that that matter should be decided.

Well, gentlemen, there are many other things I could speak about. Take this Tithe question. I am sure you must regret very much—I read with very great regret, what I hope is exaggerated, the statements in the newspapers with respect to the proceedings in connection with the collection of the tithe in North Wales. I am not going to enter this question, but what I have to say is this. It is extremely urgent and should be discussed. If such proceedings as those reported in the *St. James's Gazette* exist—and, by the by, the *St. James's Gazette* says—‘Will Mr Gladstone have anything to say on this subject at Swansea?’ I answer ‘Yes, I will;’ but what I have to say is this—two things only. First of all, in one respect I am glad these disturbances are in Wales and not in Ireland, because if they were in Ireland they would immediately introduce a new Coercion Bill to deal with them; secondly, I refer to them because they illustrate my position. Welsh questions which ought to be discussed—and in this instance they are urgent, because they concern public order, public peace, and even the safety of lives—cannot be discussed because of the state of public business in the House of Commons.

I must say something about what is called the state of business, the block of business. You all know it is customary to say that Ireland constitutes the block of business, and there are some gentlemen whose imaginations are so lively or whose partisanship is so keen that they say I have put Ireland in the way of public progress and enabled Ireland to have a painful

and deplorable monopoly of the time of the House of Commons. Gentlemen, that is fundamentally untrue. It was not I nor the leaders of the Liberal party that made Irish questions since December 1885 the leading subject in the House. It was Lord Salisbury and the Tory party; and you will permit me to remind you that before we came into office, in February 1886, and determined to occupy the time of Parliament by proposing remedial measures by which we meant to take the difficulty out of the way—before that change of Government, the first Tory Government announced immediately after that election, when they no longer wanted the Irish vote, they intended to propose Coercion. That was in January 1886. Well, we have always said, we have said last year and this year, that it is a question either of coercion or remedy. There was no doubt about it from the moment Ireland enjoyed (I thank God) the same large extension of the franchise you have now got in Wales. From the moment Ireland used that great instrument of national power and returned 86 out of really 101—for I never can regard the Dublin University Members as representing Ireland—from the moment 86 Members came to Parliament it was demonstrated that, until the great and fundamental sore of Ireland could be healed, that wound was so grievous and deep that the Irish case in one way or another must be the primary, engrossing, absorbing subject of deliberation in the affairs of Parliament; and so it has been last year. I admit we took up the time of Parliament in discussing Home Rule. This year the time has been much more exclusively absorbed in Irish matters. All the time that was spent in what is called the reform of the rules of Procedure¹ in the House of Commons was really spent by the Government in order to have more powerful instruments for the repression and coercion of the Irish people, and therefore it has been always Ireland in one shape or another, and for the first time has been done that which we never wished to do, and that which, if we had wished, we should not have dared to do. The independent voice of the

¹ The debate began on February 21st, and ended on March 18th, when the "Closure" Resolution was carried.

House has been extinguished. The five days per week, of which three formerly belonged to independent Members and two only to the Government—the five days per week have all been given to the Government and employed by them in bringing forward as well as they can their wanton, insidious, and insulting Coercion Bill. How, if there is a block of business in Parliament—and I admit there is—how is the time employed? Not by our unnecessarily and prematurely forcing the consideration of the Home Rule Bill. We have not attempted to say one word about Home Rule during the course of a session which has unhappily been occupied by an alternative policy, the mischievous and miserable policy of coercion, and therefore it is rather too bad when the Prime Minister talks, as he does, about what he calls this terrible gigantic engine of obstruction, and asserts that they have to oppose this gigantic engine of obstruction wielded, as he says, by Mr Gladstone. Therefore I, who have the honour to belong to a party which at present reckons only over one-fourth of the House of Commons—we are about 195; that is more than one-fourth, but a great deal less than one-third—I will not go into figures minutely; but it is what is called a miserable minority, so miserable a minority that after the last election nearly all the Tory Press, from *The Times* downwards, said that Home Rule was extinguished for ever, and that it was disposed of by that election. Under these circumstances it is rather a strong measure for a Minister whose followers number 125 more than ourselves, and supported by 60 or 70 dissentient Liberals with a zeal for the most part surpassing his own followers, so that he has more than 400 men in the House of Commons, to lay upon us, in our state of decrepitude, in our state of extinction—to say that we have wielded this gigantic engine of obstruction.

What is this gigantic engine of obstruction? I could tell you why the Coercion Bill has been delayed. I admit its progress has been miserably slow. It has been delayed because it has been badly constructed, because it has been wanting in basis of fact, because it is extravagant and in-

sidious in its objects, and totally mismanaged as well as misconceived. I have not got it here or I would show it to you. We passed the first clause of the Bill and the second. Now it was upon the first clause that the time was occupied mainly, and when this gigantic engine of obstruction came in the way. When the first clause came before the House of Commons it consisted, I think, of 34 lines, but when it passed through the Committee stage it had nearly 120 lines. What does that show? It shows that the Government did not know how to draft or construct their Bill. It shows that so many faults were hit, so many weak points were discovered, so many gaps had to be dealt with, that with all their majority—their magnificent majority, 60, 70, 80, 90, and 100—they were obliged to let the clause swell and expand from 34 lines into something like four times that number.

I have had a great deal to do with legislation. I have been responsible for carrying what may be called more heavy Bills through the House of Commons perhaps than any man now living. But I do not recollect ever having introduced a Bill, either of this kind or any other kind, with clauses so badly constructed and involving such difficult matters that a clause of 34 lines should, before it was passed through Committee, become swollen to 100. These are the reasons why business is delayed, because those who are doing the business of the country do not know how to do it. I do not mean to say that there have not been questions where half an hour or an hour's discussion might have been dispensed with. But can you be surprised that Members for Ireland should be jealous, should be cautious to scrutinise with the eye of a lynx every line and every word of a Bill of this kind, when not only are they threatened with coercion, when the causes which formerly led to coercion do not exist, but when they are also insulted by having proposed to Parliament a perpetual Coercion Bill for Ireland?

And now what are these unmanly and effeminate complaints of Lord Salisbury and his majority? They complain that Ireland does not take her flogging quietly. It

was because Ireland would not take the loss of her liberties and the insult to her honour quietly that this delay in the business of the country has been caused. They say, and with great truth, that Parliament has extremely fatigued itself in administering this flogging process to Ireland. It has been quickly fatigued by the work, and it is very hard work. We have been obliged to make the Whitsun holiday longer than usual because the Tories go about complaining that the work in Ireland has fatigued and exhausted them. It reminds me of an incident which occurs in that remarkable book by Mrs Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which work had an enormous moral power in bringing about that blessed event—the abolition of slavery in America. Mrs Stowe, who draws her characters with wonderful facility, introduces Mrs Sinclair, the wife of a wealthy Southern planter. She herself is not humane. She flogs the slaves with her own hand, unrestrained by any legal limitation. But it so happens that her health is not good; she is nervous, hysterical, and dyspeptic; the muscles are not what they ought to be, and her life is a continued lamentation of the hardship of her case for the fatigue she experiences in consequence of performing the necessary duties of flogging the slaves. We have been flogging Ireland with rare periods of intermission for centuries, and it is no wonder that the operation causes a little fatigue, it is no wonder that Lord Salisbury's arm is tired. We will tell him that it will be more and more tired, for it is impossible to permanently govern a free people by coercive means in the light of day and in the atmosphere of freedom which happily pervades this country.

I do not know that there is more I ought to say now, but I should like to point out this. I have ventured to compare certain questions in which you are interested, and which still remain for solution, to the case of railway trains which were all delayed and stopped and run into a heap, waiting until the line is cleared. A bad accident has taken place—I think a very fair illustration of the case—and the bad accident which has taken place is the miscarriage and

breakdown of our Government in Ireland, which requires great change to take place in order that Parliament may be relieved of a painful block and the line may be cleared. What does the railway company do when an accident of this kind has occurred? Why, they set to work to clear the line, and in a few hours after the accident the line is cleared. Gentlemen, that was how we went to work last year, and in discussing Home Rule then, it was in order that there might be no impediment in public business. We want to clear the line. What has happened this year? Are the present Government, the present Tory Parliament, clearing the line? If this was a lost year it would be better. It has not been a negative year, with results equal to zero, but a year seriously given to going backwards, for everything has been sacrificed to a Coercion Bill which will probably become law, and when it is it will leave us much further from the final and necessary solution than when we began the Session. The case would have been very different if we had been allowed to proceed in April and May last year. We made an effort to bring about a friendly and conciliatory state of mind apart from party objects and connections, because the Imperial object we had in view soared far above all party objects and connections, however important they may be. If that had been done the line would have been clear. If the people of England had concurred with the people of Wales, the people of Scotland, and the people of Ireland, we should have been able to carry out what we proposed. But the people of England are not infallible. They are not very rapid in their perception, and it is said in foreign countries that, although the English people have very strong sympathy with the liberty of peoples who think themselves oppressed, yet those sentiments and that sympathy are apt to take a direction over the British Channel and travel all about Europe with great celerity and advantage, but never travel westward of St. George's Channel.

You see the difference between what is and what might have been. If I really believed that Ireland could be pacified with such means as are now in operation, it would be a different

matter. Pray recollect that the principal opposition against this Bill is not because it is not desirable to strengthen the law against crime, and not because it is mainly directed against crime, but because it is directed against those combinations of the people which in this country are known as Trade Unions. These Trade Unions have been open to a great deal of criticism; but, notwithstanding, they have vindicated the independence of the labouring population of this country, and upon the whole have been productive of an enormous balance of good. The labouring population of this country had a power which the labouring population of Ireland did not possess. This is an attempt to strike down combinations not when they pass into crime, because we make no difficulty or objection to the punishment of combinations that pass into crime; but this has received, and I trust will receive, the hearty and determined opposition of every Liberal politician. I am certain it receives the hearty condemnation of the great bulk of the people of this country. The manifestations of this are so clear that they leave no room for doubt.

You have no great opportunity now before you; nobody can tell when you will. But cultivate union of sentiment among yourselves; cultivate the extension of knowledge, especially of historical knowledge, of the Irish question. Believe in the Irish people to this extent, that they are human beings—full of noble qualities—and that if they have defects—as no doubt they have, for we all, in every country, have them—in my belief there is no country on the face of the earth in which you can so clearly trace those defects to the misgovernment and oppression from which they have been suffering for centuries. Believing, then, in the Irish people to that extent, do not credit the statement of those who have said and who are fond of saying—they do not always let it out in public, but it is known to be their normal sentiment—that Ireland is a country only made to be governed by force. Ireland is no more made to be governed by force than Wales or England or Scotland was made to be governed by force. It is the injustice with which she has been treated

that has brought nearly all her miseries and nineteen-twentieths of her sin. That proposition is, in my opinion, an undeniable proposition. It is for you to consider whether you will take your stand on that ground or not. But, gentlemen, if you do take your stand upon it, I will venture to cheer you in what is now a difficult and arduous task, to cheer you with the assertion that in the future your triumph is as certain as anything in the future can be, and that in the present you have the hearty sympathy and the approbation and the prayers on your behalf of the British Empire at large, of the Anglo-Saxon race at large, and of civilised Christendom in all quarters of the world.

THE IRISH QUESTION

SWANSEA, JUNE 4, 1887

(See head-note to preceding speech.)

SIR HUSSEY VIVIAN, MY LORDS, AND GENTLEMEN,—You will readily believe that I have not only been impressed but almost oppressed by a sense of the events and manifestations of to-day, and if it were in your power really to invest me with the qualities which your kindness ascribes to me, I should possess faculties to serve my country infinitely in advance of any I can claim; but such as I am, I am at the command of my country. A limited span may still be allotted to me for public service after a term already extended much beyond what is usually given to man, and this will be given to the service of my country, in spite of my deep sense of the violence done to nature in carrying on through old age, especially as it approaches extreme old age, a life of contention; yet the service of my country is a purpose great and so special as, sir, it has been so justly described by you—a purpose, not only affecting the happiness, contentment, and social order, the peace and happiness of all classes in Ireland, but likewise having such a position in regard to Imperial affairs and Imperial honour that, for the present at least, it may be said to overshadow and absorb in itself all and every other question. On that question, gentlemen, I should wish to say some words to you to-night. I have never felt that, in proposing to grant Ireland—subject to the unity of the Empire and the authority of Parliament—a full and real power to manage exclusively Irish affairs, I was proposing a Liberal measure in a mere party sense. A Liberal measure it is in this sense—in this broad and noble sense—that it is a just

and a generous measure, and those who cast their eyes over the history of the present century will, I think, in future times acknowledge, and, I believe, that impartial historians will record in how large and comprehensive a degree the hand of the Liberal party has been practically associated with liberty and justice. But I am bound to say that I regard nothing in that measure of a character to associate with any extremes of political opinion. It is in the first place a Conservative measure. We, the Liberals, aim at calling back to existence, subject to due safeguards and control, a Parliament in the place of the ancient Legislature which was ruthlessly and cruelly put an end to at the close of the last century. This is surely a Conservative measure. The Irish people are struggling in conformity with their ancient principles; and that, gentlemen, is no special feature of a democratic policy, and it is absolutely the reverse of an innovating policy. It is to me a matter of grief and pain that this question has become a party question, because men of true Conservative spirit who ought to have recognised in it a true Conservative measure have no doubt been misled, and acting on their rights have deemed it their duty to give it their fiercest opposition. But let us look at the state of the facts for a moment. This opposition commenced a fierce struggle upon matters which, had there been no such struggle, would have been disposed of under very different conditions, and would have had very different effects. Supposing we had been permitted to carry our proposal last year, the whole subject would by this time have been disposed of, and Parliament would have been free to prosecute its legitimate and ordinary business. You have had a great loss in the interposition of a serious impediment to that progress, but, gentlemen, you will have probably a compensation for that loss. In the first place, those of you who may profess strong Radical or Democratic opinions will probably have to recognise that the present state of facts is rapidly driving forward those Radical and Democratic opinions. In that sense I recognise the great distinction between two men who have both of them been most active, after a long career of

Liberalism, in opposing the measures promoted by the general body of the Liberal party—I mean Lord Hartington and Mr Chamberlain. Lord Hartington, of whom I shall speak but with respect, is what may be called a very moderate Liberal. But, gentlemen, the course that he has taken, in my judgment, has tended more than anything that has happened for a long series of years to the extinction of what is specially called moderate Liberalism. Mr Chamberlain, on the other hand, has been acting, in my opinion, much more in conformity with the generous creed. I know not whether the desire to advance Radicalism was a leading motive with him in opposing our measure, but I am quite confident that that opposition tends to drive the Liberal party into a position which will accentuate all its more pronounced opinions, and which will throw the weaker and less pronounced opinions that have heretofore found acceptance within its limits into darkness or into the shade. I speak of this with perfect impartiality, because if I have never called myself a Whig, and never called myself a moderate Liberal, so I have never called myself a Radical, or called myself an advanced Liberal. The name Liberal has been good enough for me.

But, gentlemen, there is another point connected with this question which, I think, ought to be in your view when you feel vexed, perhaps, and disappointed as you may yet feel at the delay which has been interposed in the way of the fulfilment of some of your dearest wishes, and that is, that I think the careful observer cannot fail to recognise this fact—that the great principle of nationality which underlies all human affairs is largely at issue in the present contest, and the more that principle is contested the more firm will be the roots that it will drive into the surface. I have no doubt that when this Home Rule question is settled the principle of nationality on which Wales has so considerably to depend for the recognition of specific wants and specific opinions will be in a state of far more vigorous life than it would have been if our proposal had been recognised last year, and I think it ought to have been

recognised as a Conservative proposal and allowed to pass with discussion and with amendments in the best form of which it was susceptible, but without the fierce contest in which we are at present engaged.

This question of Home Rule has slept to a considerable extent during the present year. As far as I am personally concerned, I have not been anxious to awake it prematurely, and for this reason—that I have heard a great deal of vague declamation; I have heard of many loose and ill-defined propositions floating in the air to which I have been challenged to give my assent. But I have an ancient habit, derived from the school of my early political life, which I have not unlearned and which I never mean to abandon, and which makes me deliberately determined never to accept any general proposal excepting when I see the mode of its being made healthful and practical. I have a great horror of premature decisions. To decide too late is the greatest of all faults, but the next fault to it is to decide too early, and to decide too early is a fault as often committed as to decide too late. But these are only my own personal leanings or habits. The reason why we who constituted the last Government have not said a great deal about Home Rule is because the Commons have been sufficiently occupied with other matters. We have been treated five days a week to a many-sided discussion of an important though painful character. Home Rule has been blocked out, and at one time it appeared as if Coercion were going to be blocked out by a scandalous controversy¹—namely, that discussion raised in *The Times* newspaper, which was intended to ruin and crush the man who, at all events, is looked on by five or six millions of Her Majesty's subjects as entitled to their warmest feelings. This man has been assailed by

¹ On April 18th the *Times* had published a *facsimile* of a letter, purporting to be written by Mr. Parnell, afterwards (February 1890) declared to be a forgery by the Special Commission. On May 2nd, in one of a series of articles on "Parnellism and Crime," the same journal had attacked Mr. Dillon, the member for East Mayo. After two nights' debate the House (on May 5th) refused to treat this article as a breach of privilege. Mr. Gladstone moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the truth of the charges made against Mr. Dillon, but his amendment was defeated by 317 to 233 (May 6th).

weapons never before used, to my knowledge, against an Englishman or a Scotchman, and if used they would have been resented with indignation and contempt by the whole of the right-minded community. Inquiry in the only form known to our traditions—that is to say, inquiry before a Parliamentary Committee—has been refused in this case, and measures have been awarded to Irishmen which no Englishman would either have received or endured.

But I pass on, as I wish to speak on this subject of Home Rule. Although it is blocked out of Parliament, it is perfectly natural, inasmuch as it lies at the root of all our political affairs at the present day, that it should occupy a permanent place in our minds. Now the Whitsuntide recess has afforded an appropriate time for the consideration of the Home Rule question, and the place in which I have the satisfaction of addressing you is not less appropriate, because you are the true representatives of the mass of the Welsh people—true representatives, as has been proved by the severest test—that of the late election. You are in a condition to consider this question freely and at large. Your own minds are clearly made up on it, and anything that may be said as to the best means of advancing it will receive from you impartial consideration. It is sometimes supposed or alleged that I have shown an undue rigour on this subject, and have declined to make any change in the proposals submitted to Parliament by the late Government. Now I may remind you that this is far from the fact. At the last election one of the proposals most discussed was the plan for giving Irish landlords power to sell their estates, and in that plan we travelled enormous lengths in the hope of bringing about a conciliatory settlement. In that proposal we ran no financial risk, though a large engagement of Imperial credit was pledged. This engagement was unacceptable to the country, and I have since declared my view that it is practicable to submit a measure without introducing a question of Imperial credit. That certainly is an important change. But I have observed with pain that in no single speech, or single letter from any one of our opponents, whether

Conservative or Liberal, has that change been so much as noticed, or valued at as much as a fourpenny piece. I have also said that in my mind the financial arrangements which we proposed will require further consideration. That is scarcely a political matter, but the truth is, that the financial arrangements since the Union with Ireland was constituted have been of extreme complexity, and I have arrived at the opinion that further and deeper consideration of the particulars ought to be had than it was possible for us to have before introducing our Bill into Parliament.

There are two important changes. A man whose name I would mention with honour—Sir George Trevelyan¹—has, I believe, suggested that it would be very desirable, with a view to that reunion of the Liberal party which we all greatly desire, that some conference should take place between 'Lord Hartington and myself, or some person acting on my behalf. I say, with regard to that, that I accept the suggestion freely and cordially. I do not think I am in a position to make a proposal to Lord Hartington, for this reason—that on the last occasion when I had a communication with him with regard to Irish affairs I found him indisposed to admit that he ever assented to the constitution of any assembly, qualified under however strict conditions, to act for the whole of Ireland. I know not what is his present state of mind on the subject, but I think that after finding him in such a condition as that, it would be impertinence in me to suggest such a conference. At the same time, if Lord Hartington should indicate a willingness or desire for such a conference, he would find in me the readiest response. I should feel confident that no harm could result from it; whatever good might result would be the work of a man perfectly honest, perfectly unselfish, and perfectly plain, and I should feel on safe ground in conferring with him.

Much has been said out of Wales, and perhaps something

¹ He had been Chief Secretary for Ireland 1882-85, and Secretary for Scotland in 1886, but had quitted the Cabinet when the Home Rule Bill was introduced, but finally supported Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy, and in August 1887 was elected Member for the Bridgeton Division of Glasgow.

in Wales, as to the position which the representatives of Ireland would bear to the Parliament in Westminster. This subject has greatly perplexed many minds, but if you ask me how many, I must frankly own that I think it has not perplexed a great many minds among the people of this country. They have looked on the question broadly as a matter of truth, honour, and justice. They have taken a thoroughly national and Imperial view of it, and they have not allowed the consideration of any secondary question, however weighty, to prejudice them, or stop their straightforward course upon the path which they know leads to a desirable consummation. But at the same time much has been said, perhaps by some for the sake simply of throwing difficulty in our way—on that I will not dwell—and by others in perfect good faith. For example, there are many who say—and I do not put entirely a negative upon it—that the representation of Ireland at Westminster is a symbol of Imperial unity, and is in the nature of a means to secure it, and ought not to be lightly put aside. Well, in Scotland there is a feeling of a more definite character, and that feeling may possibly in a degree have found its way into Wales. You are aware better than I am to what extent that is the case. But in Scotland there is a considerable amount of desire for some kind of Home Rule for Scotland, and the persons who entertain that desire have been startled with this idea. They say to themselves, if Irish representatives are excluded from the Parliament of Westminster on account of their having a Parliament in Dublin, we shall never be able to get any assembly for our own local affairs without being excluded from the Parliament of Westminster. And certainly I agree from the bottom of my heart with the Scotch in thinking that nothing could be more preposterous, more unnecessary, more absurd, than to exclude Scotch Members from the Parliament of Westminster. Now, I know not whether a feeling of that kind prevails in Wales or not. I have not heard much of it. But, at any rate, whether it does or not, I think there is ground for recognising it as a fact, and endeavouring to give to the desire for infor-

nation which is not unnaturally entertained whatever satisfaction the question may permit. Now, I am going to call your attention particularly to this question of the retention or exclusion of Irish Members from Westminster, in connection with the establishment of a Parliament or local legislative body in Dublin for the management of exclusively Irish affairs; and I think it may be well to remind you of what has actually taken place on the subject, from which you will see how entirely free we are to deal with the whole of this question as policy and good sense may dictate. When the Irish Government Bill was introduced I was closely pressed to declare what were the essential conditions of that Bill, what were the essential objects in the project, so that it might be understood in the future what portions of the Bill were open to discussion and what were already closed to discussion; and on April 13, 1886, I laid down five points¹ as essential points. One point was, that Imperial unity should be preserved—of course, through the supremacy of Parliament. The second point was, that all the kingdom should be kept upon the basis of essential political equality. The third was, that there should be an equitable distribution of Imperial burdens. I will not say anything now upon that, because I conceive there is no doubt about it. Fourthly, that there should be safeguards for minorities. Well, that had reference to the jealousies which prevailed in Ulster, and we again declared that if there is a desire—a well-considered desire—on the part of the Protestant population in the portion of Ulster capable of being dealt with separately, we were perfectly agreed to consider any plan for that purpose. And, fifthly, the last essential was that the measure we proposed should be in the nature of what is called a final arrangement—a real settlement—we never can speak of absolute finality,—but still that it should be in the nature of one of those real settlements, which we expect not to be followed at any early time by a re-agitation of the subject. These were the five essential points of the measure, and you will observe that at that date the inclusion or exclusion

¹ See p. 55.

of Irish Members at Westminster was not among our essential points. It was left to be dealt with freely as the expediency and conviction of the country might determine. I then go on to observe what took place. Our proposal was, that for a time at any rate, it would be better that the Irish Members should not appear at Westminster; but a gentleman of great weight in our debates¹ suggested that although he believed that the Irish would be, and must be, for a time unhappily absorbed in dealing with the perplexed problem which the state of Ireland, after all our miscarriages, and all our mismanagement, presents, yet after a time, and when that work was accomplished, probably there would be a desire for a state of things in which there ought to be some kind of Irish representation at Westminster. That was stated by Mr Whitbread on the 12th of April. I did not reject that opinion at all; on the contrary, when Mr Whitbread had given his view I stated that there was great force in what he had said; but I was not able to bind myself, far less my colleagues. You will easily understand that a leader of the Government cannot, upon questions arising in debate, there and then, without taking the deliberate opinion of his colleagues, undertake to say what their judgment would be. That would be to reduce them to servitude. I could not bind myself with the Government, but unquestionably I would not close the door against the proposition. Therefore, you see that at that time we were perfectly open to consider the plan for the inclusion, if it should be found expedient, of the Irish Members in Westminster.

That, gentlemen, is what has taken place. Now let me say that in my opinion, for the right management of this question, the one thing that is beyond all others necessary is that we should clearly in our own minds regulate our conduct according to what we clearly see upon the one question,—what points are essential, and what points are secondary. Now, of the five points I have mentioned, three of them are practically not in controversy. The only two that remain are—on the side of Great Britain, the unity of the Empire and the supremacy of

¹ Mr Whitbread, Member for Bedford.

Parliament, and on the side of Ireland that the measure of Home Rule—that is, the management of strictly Irish affairs by strictly Irish authority—shall be real and effective, and shall be accepted as real and effective by the Irish nation. In my opinion these are the essential points, and everything else is open to consideration. We thought so last year; still more I think so now; and therefore there should be no alarm from the supposition—the futile and idle supposition—that we have some foregone conviction in our minds to the effect that the representation of Irish affairs by Irish Members in the Westminster Parliament is an essential condition of the plan of giving Home Rule to Ireland. This question of the retention or exclusion of Irish Members is a question of great importance and great difficulty, but it is a British much more than an Irish question. The Irish have made no essential point of it from the beginning. The Irish wish to be as free as possible, that they may give their attention to the settlement of the many Irish problems they have before them connected with the different branches of the work of government. What we have in view is undoubtedly the peace and happiness of Ireland. It is an international question that we want to settle; we want to make Ireland a source of strength, instead of a source of weakness. We want not to be in the same position as we were in the last great war, when our military strength being required to be put into use all over the globe, we had to keep 40,000 men in Ireland to keep down the people. We want to clear the character of England, which stands disgraced throughout the world for its treatment of Ireland for 700 years. These are the great and Imperial and international matters we have to settle, and they are the main questions. The question of the retention of Members at Westminster is a British question, which will always be a British one, and as to which the Irish may always be expected to conform to the well-considered wishes of Britain.

That being so, I think I may present to you one or two other points having a practical connection with the future bearing of the subject. Are we right to decide now at the

present moment the exact manner and exact conditions under which, after Home Rule has been established in Ireland, the Irish representation at Westminster shall be regulated and adjusted? In my own opinion I frankly tell you I greatly doubt it. I have come across no one who has a plan cut and dried for that object, and I am afraid that if I found such a plan I should probably discover in it some proofs of the weakness and precipitancy rather than of the strength and foresight of the man who prepared it. At any rate, there is no such plan that I know of. Lord Spencer,¹ who, by his personal character and political wisdom, should be expected to render to his country services probably even more distinguished than those which he has already performed—Lord Spencer wisely observed in a speech delivered a few days ago that when we came to the adjustment of this matter it is really a choice of difficulties. I greatly doubt whether it is possible to escape from all the difficulties which present themselves in the adjustment of this question, but when we find that the question is so beset with difficulties, not of principle—because the principles applicable to the subject are not opposed—but of detail, a wise man frequently says, “Is it best to decide this matter at the present moment? Will not the lapse of time enlarge my experience and ripen my knowledge?” Beyond this question of providing for the representation of Ireland at Westminster we should consider at the present stage of things the new conditions under which the chief and central interest of Irish public life will have been carried over to Dublin, and that the bulk of Irish business, to our enormous relief, in the House of Commons will have been carried over to Dublin. Under these circumstances the prime concern of Ireland will be in her own legislative work at Dublin. It is very hard for us now to form a definite idea of how to continue the interests of Ireland through her representatives in the transaction of Imperial concerns at Westminster. It is surely a very proper opinion under the circumstances that the best

¹ Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1868-74, and 1882-85; President of the Council, 1880-82, and in 1886.

course may be to take advantage of time, and if there is no essential reason for connecting in point of time the determination of the question of the retention or exclusion of the Irish Members with the question of Home Rule, then we should allow it to stand over for a time until we are more thoroughly prepared and have better experience, and know better the ground upon which we are standing. Mr Whitbread proposed that for a time Irish representation should be dropped except for certain purposes which were fully contemplated, but which I need not dwell upon to-night; but speaking generally, that Irish representation should be resumed when we have acquired more extensive knowledge. That was the principle laid down by Mr Whitbread, and that was what was deemed by many—by me among others—to have in it a great deal of sense and sagacity; but I can conceive that while the principle of Mr. Whitbread's suggestion, viz., the adjournment of the question, might be retained, it might be altered in form. You might say: "As there is no immediate and urgent necessity for dealing with the question of Irish representation at Westminster, while there is for dealing with that of Home Rule, I will deal with the question of Home Rule, and I will after a term, as Mr. Whitbread suggested, take up the question of the Irish representation at Westminster, when I may be in a condition to judge in what mode and with what details that question can be best practically adjusted." That would be an inversion of what he suggests, but it would be a retention of his proposal as to principle.

Now there are many points which it would be very difficult to decide at the present moment. Many persons say that the Irish Members should be retained, but not in their present numbers. That is a very difficult question to settle at the present day. Pray observe that if you are to reduce their numbers now, you must form a new system of representation in Parliament at Westminster, at the same time as you frame a new one in the Dublin Parliament—a great practical difficulty, and one which the man of common sense in political affairs will not encounter till he is driven to encounter it, as he

will rather wait for a better knowledge of the position. That is one of the modes of proceeding. I am very far from saying that Mr Whitbread's proposal as it formerly stood, or the inversion, is the only one; but I will just point out to you a proposal of a kind that is more practical. The practice of Parliament has been, when it legislates on a particular subject and desires to secure a reconsideration of the subject at a given time—it was used in the case of the Bank of England, in the case of the East India Company, and, I think, in a number of other cases—the practice has been to legislate for a certain number of years so as to require that at their termination the matter should be again mentioned within the walls of the House.

There are many other modes of dealing with the subject. I will not enter on them. I own I do not think I am fit to enter on them. I do not see my way sufficiently as to the best mode in which it can be adjusted, but this I do see my way to without any of the difficulties connected with the matters which are really British questions, which I may almost say are internal questions to us, for Ireland possesses no title to a capital interest in them, and which are questions which will always remain in our discretion. No difference connected with this question ought for a moment to impede our steady march upon the path on which we are entered—the path which leads us to a happy consummation of a just and politic arrangement between the two nations. I have reminded you of the objects which the arrangement contemplated—objects, the dearest which can endear them to the hearts of men, the greatness of the Empire, the solidity of the Empire, the true cohesion of the Empire, the happiness of the people, the union of classes, the establishment of social order, the rule of law by moral as well as by physical force in one of the great divisions of the country, and finally the restoration of the honour and character of the country, so grievously compromised by this painful subject. These are the objects which make our present arduous labours worth persevering in and make us determined to pursue them. There was on one of the banners we saw to-day a phrase that I referred to in addressing our friends

outside, and which made a deep impression upon me—"The union of hearts, not manacles." What is our union with Ireland now? It is the union of manacles and not of hearts. It is a force that attaches Ireland to us. What said Mr Bright? If Ireland were towed out 2000 miles into the Atlantic your relations with Ireland would be at an end. We want to substitute for that union of force the union of hearts. We want that Ireland shall be united to England as Wales is united to England, as Scotland is united to England, not that they should be dead to their own national interests and concerns, but that they should desire to pursue them and promote them as measures of a firmly united and compacted Empire. We have a state of things in Ireland by which, if we seize and do not lose the golden opportunity, this same union may be gained. While Ireland, in consonance with her traditions and in consequence of those physical circumstances by which she is divided from us by the Channel, desires the management of her own concerns, she is happily disposed to union with us and to be at one with us in everything that concerns the greatness of the Empire; but if this golden opportunity be lost we know not when it will return. The rule is that lost opportunities do not return, or, if they return, they return only after long intervals and after heavy damages have been paid for the original neglect. God grant that these mischiefs may be avoided, at any rate with regard to the subject that is now before us.

The practical upshot of what I have endeavoured to say to you is this:—I do not dream of allowing any consideration of party to interfere with the attainment of the great objects before us. I think I may say that, while I differ slightly from my excellent friend, our host, in the opinion he has given that this is a matter that Tories will not settle, I go with him to the extent of thinking the Tories will not settle it except under compulsion. Why did the Tories settle Roman Catholic emancipation? 'Because,' said the Duke of Wellington, 'of the apprehensions of a civil war.' I will not say, why did the Tories settle the abolition of the Corn Laws? That was a very different case. They settled it because Sir Robert

Peel and his Government were firmly convinced of the soundness of the principles of Free Trade. They made their confession, they acknowledged their error, they spoke like men of the work of reparation, they sacrificed office, and they broke up party for the sake of the country. Why, in 1867, after a most moderate proposal in 1866 for lowering the franchise had been rejected by the action of the old Tory party—let me tell you, by the action also of many of those Liberals who, now disguised as dissentients, were described by Mr Bright as inhabitants of the Cave of Adullam—why did these gentlemen, having taken that course in 1866, and having by that course ejected us from office and put themselves in our place, come down in 1867 with a proposal of household suffrage? If the franchise were surrendered, if the Protestant Constitution were surrendered,—surely there could be nothing more sacred than that. Why, there were the Coronation Oath, the Established Church, the sacred charter of Protestantism. It was in the interest of all these things that Roman Catholic emancipation had been denied, and yet under the pressure of a civil necessity it was granted; and therefore, gentlemen, I am more hopeful than my hon. friend, our host, that upon a fitting occasion the Tories may incline their minds favourably to Home Rule.

I do not know how that may be, but this I know—that as far as I am concerned, if a measure be proposed, I care not by whom, that will give Ireland an effective scheme, a really effective scheme, of Home Rule, subject, of course, to the supremacy of Parliament and the unity of the Empire, but accepted freely by the people of Ireland. I certainly am not the man to stand in the way of such a measure. It will be accepted, and more, it will be promoted by me to the best of my ability, even although it may not settle at the time the question of Irish representation at Westminster, or even although it may involve some plan for the adjustment of matters which may not commend itself to me as absolutely the best upon which to proceed. I will do that, gentlemen, which I have endeavoured to recommend to you, and which I believe the bulk of the Liberal party in this country have already done for themselves—that is, to distin-

guish broadly and clearly between primary and non-primary purposes, and never to let slip the essential thing for the sake of any kind of thing which is secondary. Therefore, I hope you will be relieved from the trouble of listening to anybody who may hereafter say, as it has been sometimes said heretofore, that I am one who has made the exclusion of the Irish Members from the Parliament at Westminster an essential part of the scheme of Home Rule, because I think that what I have said to you is perfectly clear and must have removed any doubt on that point from your minds, and must show you that I mean to act upon that which I really recommend to all others—namely, to go forward to the realisation of the great objects we have in view, objects which I may well call sacred, by the application of every principle that determines right and wrong in the transactions of mankind, and to believe that with respect to the details and the secondary arrangements, important as they may be, which group themselves round the greater purposes, we shall be well able, if we use common prudence and sagacity, at the proper time to adjust them also, and that, by the blessing of the Almighty, that which has heretofore been true of England—that the sun never sets on the Empire of the Queen—will be true in this richer and truer sense, that it shall never set on an Empire which is not only vast in geographical extent, but strongly united in the hearts and minds of all those who people it. With these views I need not detain you longer. I thank you very much for the opportunity you have given me. I have endeavoured to explain myself very fully on a matter of some difficulty and importance; but I desire to give all the explanation I possibly can to those who seek it in good faith, although I am afraid that there are opponents who cannot and will not be satisfied, and with regard to whom we can only deal by manful, upright, and conscientious conduct, and in this manner I believe our efforts are certain to be crowned by eventual and, I hope, early triumph.

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT (IRELAND) BILL

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JULY 7, 1887

The Motion for the Third Reading of the Bill was made on this date and carried the next night by 349 to 262.

MR. SPEAKER,—In moving the rejection of this Bill, I will endeavour to confine myself directly to matters directly bearing upon the question at issue, and thereby to confine my remarks within moderate compass, avoiding altogether all allusions to imputations and accusations, on which a good deal, perhaps, might be said, if it were convenient to the House that it should be done, in respect to the course of former proceedings on the Bill. Now, sir, I must endeavour to consider the Bill with regard to what it is, and also in its relation to Irish policy. As respects its relation to Irish policy, I am of opinion—and perhaps that opinion is shared even by many who sit on the opposite side of the House, at all events it is my own conviction—that the Bill now before us is the alternative to a policy of what is termed Home Rule or self-government for Ireland in Irish affairs; and likewise, that being so, it is a great mistake to treat this Bill, which is called a Crimes Bill, and more popularly called a Coercion Bill, as if it were a Coercion Bill of the ordinary character. In my opinion, sir, it marks a new era—and a disastrous era—in the history of Coercion, and perhaps I may be permitted to refer to a declaration which I was empowered to make on the part of the Government which was in office in April 1886, in two very short passages, where I ventured to point out that the Coercion in use up to that time had not attained its end, and

that what we had probably to contemplate was, that if we continued upon the lines of Coercion it must be Coercion of a new description, and I said:—

“If it is to attain its end, it must be differently maintained with a different spirit, courage, and consistency compared with the Coercion with which we have been heretofore familiar. . . . If Coercion is to be the basis for legislation, we must no longer be seeking, as we are always laudably seeking, to whittle it down almost to nothing at the very first moment we begin ; but we must, like men, adopt it, hold by it, sternly enforce it, till its end has been completely attained—with what results, peace, goodwill, and freedom I do not now stop to inquire. Our ineffectual and spurious Coercion is morally worn out.”—(3 *Hansard* [304], 1041-2.)

And, sir, it does appear to me that the distinction is a broad one between the two kinds of Coercion to which I referred. The old Coercion was aimed at crime. The new Coercion—I will not deny that it includes crime in its aim—but it passes beyond the aim at crime; and it aims at association. Association is the only weapon whereby the many and the poor can redress the inequality of their struggle with wealth, influence, power, and administrative authority. This is a broad and a most important distinction to which I will call the attention of the House further on in terms calculated, so far as I can find them, to make it clear to the House and to the country ; but my first contention is this—that this Bill has been introduced and has been brought to its present stage, and will, no doubt, be carried on through what still remains of its progress—has been brought in without any care whatever to justify the introduction of it, even had it been a Coercion Bill of the ancient fashion, directed simply against crime. Now, I wish to found myself on that allegation, not upon the use of vague and general terms, but upon statements which the House can check, and which it is in the power of opponents to confute if they be untrue.

For my first statement, which I have had occasion to make at various times during the events of the present year, is one that cannot altogether, I think, be deemed unworthy of attention. It is this—that we who are inflicting special and restrictive criminal legislation upon Ireland

belong to a country which has more crime than Ireland has. I have made that assertion repeatedly, and an hon. and learned Member of this House, who has treated me with a most perfect courtesy, addressed a letter to *The Times*, in which he said that as this assertion had been repeatedly made, he thought it was material that its inaccuracy should be exposed; and that hon. Member proceeded to expose the inaccuracy by comparing crime upon a basis, which, in the first place, as he has since admitted, included serious or gross errors; and, in the second place—when no other refuge was left—by comparing the crime on a basis of the aggregate number of offences committed in the country, including all those which it has never been usual to include in the records of permanent and serious crime—namely, those which are not indictable offences. I confine myself, as has been invariably done, to indictable offences; and I do not look to those acts which are differently classified in different countries, and which generally belong to the department of what is called abroad “correctional police” rather than to the category of crime. Speaking of crime proper, I find in round numbers that the case stands about thus—that in England the convictions—of which I am now speaking alone—would represent something under one in 2500, in Scotland something under one in 2000, and in Ireland a trifle over one in 3000. That is as relates to convictions.

It may be said that the law in Ireland is not so effective as in England. Therefore, I next look to committals, and the statement relating to committals has undergone the ordeal of public discussion, because an hon. Member of this House replied to the hon. Member who had questioned my estimate of crime, and the truth and accuracy of his statement has been admitted. With respect to committals, the case, as I understand it, stands thus—in Ireland there were 2155 persons committed, against 14,062 in England and Wales. That proportion would represent the number of 54 for England and Wales upon a given population, against 44 for Ireland; or, in round numbers, still more simple, the proportion

of about 11 to 9 in favour of Ireland. Well, then, sir, it may be said that in Ireland crime is winked at, and many persons who commit crime are never discovered nor committed to prison on account of it. Then, sir, I would take the amount of indictable offences committed in the respective countries. There I find they stand thus:—In Ireland, 6961 indictable offences, representing, I believe, about 139 for a population of 10,000. In England and Wales, 43,692 indictable offences, representing 169 in a population of 10,000. We thus make good the proposition, which is to say the least singular—namely, that the three countries which are more largely afflicted with crime are invading, and permanently invading, another country where crime is less rife than it is with us.

But then it will be said, and said with some truth, that crime in Ireland, crime of a certain kind, has a peculiar character, such as it does not present in England; that it stands in relation to popular feeling and social order in a manner in which it does not stand on this side of the Channel. Sir, that is true. But this is also true; that it has always been held necessary that in order to justify a Coercion Bill there should be in Ireland a state of exceptional crime and outrage. I am now quoting the phrase which was used, and well used, not very long ago—I think at the last election—by the noble Lord the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.¹ He said there must be exceptional crime and outrage to justify Coercion, and that, unless the crime and outrage be exceptional, you will hear nothing of a Coercion Bill. Well, sir, in this House an attempt was made to interpret these words as signifying that there was a difference in the character of Irish crime as compared with the character of crime elsewhere. But that is not the basis on which Coercion Bills have been introduced in this House. Ministers had always been required to show a state of crime exceptional for Ireland—exceptional as compared with the state of crime and outrage at other periods in Ireland itself. I am quite certain that position cannot successfully be assailed. There is no exceptional

¹ Lord John Manners, afterwards Duke of Rutland.

state of crime and outrage whatever in Ireland at this time, which, according to any of our Parliamentary traditions and the well-understood doctrine and practice of the House of Commons, can constitute a warrant for the introduction of a Coercion Bill, even in the old sense of a Coercion Bill—namely, a Bill directed against crime.

Now, sir, what is the state of crime at the present time? In the year 1885 there were 916 agrarian outrages specially reported by the Constabulary. In 1886 there were 1025. I have to regret that on a former occasion I stated that the number of outrages was the same, and I was taken to task by the right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary for Ireland¹ for having so stated it. I do not think I owe any apology to the right hon. gentleman on this ground. He began by neglecting his duty altogether. He failed to lay before the House what it has been the established custom of this House for the Irish Minister to do—namely, to produce an authentic and official statement of the condition of Ireland with respect to the number of crimes and outrages when the plea is made for the introduction of a Coercion Bill. Having done that, we were left, as he kindly told us, to hunt up for ourselves and make up our own statistical accounts. A friend very kindly performed that office for me, and gave me a return which had represented the two years as nearly identical as possible. Having some suspicion of my statistics, I signified that I should be obliged to the right hon. gentleman if he would correct me if I were wrong. But he deliberately refrained from correcting me, and had the good taste and ingenuousness in his reply to charge me with having laid these inaccurate figures before the House. I take these figures as they are, and I say they constitute no case whatever for the introduction of a Coercion Bill, even in the old sense of Coercion. An increase of 10 or 11 per cent. in the year 1886 as compared with the year 1885 is not an augmentation which has ever been alleged as constituting an exceptional state of circumstances, still less can it be alleged when we recollect that the year 1886 was a year of exceptional pressure and distress, and other circum-

¹ Mr A. J. Balfour.

stances being equal, was morally certain to produce an increase of crime; and, for my own part, I think we have every reason to feel well satisfied that the increase of agrarian crime in 1886 compared with 1885 was so small an increase in the circumstances of distress and pressure that prevailed in the country. Well, sir, but no attempt has been made to reply to the statement of my right hon. friend the Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne,¹ who called the attention of the House to this very significant circumstance; in the last five months of 1885 the party now in power were in power. In those five months they did not deem the state of Ireland to be such as to make it their duty to introduce a Coercion Bill. In the first five months, and in much the greater part of those five months—namely, until the time of the Election—they were in every way disparaging Coercion, and taking much credit to themselves, which I had had every disposition to give them, for endeavouring to govern Ireland without the use of this odious instrument. In the first five months of 1887 they find a necessity for introducing a Coercion Bill—a Coercion Bill of such a character as has never been known to this House. Was there, then, a great increase or any increase at all of crime in the first five months of 1887 as compared with the last five months of 1885? On the contrary, there was a decline in the latter period as compared with the former in 1885, when they did not find a Coercion Bill necessary. In the five months of 1885 there were 474 offences; in 1887, when they did find a Coercion Bill necessary, the offences were 387.

MR BALFOUR—Which months of the year? We brought in the Coercion Bill before those five months had expired.

MR GLADSTONE—The first five months of 1887 and the last five months of 1885. I believe the comparison of months is a fair comparison, because I am not aware of anything that periodically bears on the increase of crime except the length or shortness of the day. Therefore, sir, instead of an increase of crime, we have a decrease of crime in the periods which alone we can compare in a manner to throw light upon the views and

Mr John Morley.

policy of the Government with respect to crime and Coercion, and this comparison exhibits the astounding change that has taken place in their views. With respect to the two years, that small increase in 1886, as compared with 1885, was an increase which might reasonably have been expected from the increase of distress, and is altogether insignificant with respect to the proposal to make it the basis of a Coercion Bill. Then, sir, the Government have one other refuge, and that is to fall back upon the year 1870, and show that in the year 1870 the number of reported agrarian crimes in the preceding year was smaller than the number reported in 1886. That is quite true. In 1886, as I have said, the number reported was 1025, and in 1869 the number reported was only 767.

What, then, were the circumstances in which the Coercion Bill against crime was introduced in 1870? Sir, they were these—that agrarian crime a short time before—and I must say that I am rather surprised that no Member of the Government should have turned these figures to account, or thought to exhibit the real state of facts by showing the rate of increase of crime at that time—had been almost extinct, but had begun to grow with fearful rapidity, and that growth was observable, not only from year to year, but from quarter to quarter, in such a manner as might well and reasonably alarm the friends of social order. There is a question raised as to the different modes in which the Constabulary have reported crime at one period and at another period. I do not think it has any bearing upon the argument I am now making, because the crimes, I believe, are taken according to the responsible statements made to Parliament, which exhibit with accuracy the grounds upon which Parliament adopts a certain course of legislation. The point in 1870, as I have said, was not simply the height to which agrarian crime had reached, but the rate at which it was increasing; and what was that rate? I have shown that this year there is, as compared with the time when the same set of politicians were in office and did not think coercion necessary, a large decrease. What was the case in 1870? In 1866 the number of reported agrarian offences was 87. That was increased rapidly in 1867-8-9. In 1869 the

number was 767, or nearly ninefold what it had been in 1866; and even in 1869 itself the movement was most remarkable, because, while in the first quarter of 1869, from January to March, there were 101 reported agrarian offences, in the last quarter, from October to December, which may fairly be compared with the first quarter, there were 540 such offences. Thus the increase of agrarian crime was more than fivefold within the course of a single year. What plea or shadow of justification do these facts afford for the introduction of the present Bill, which is introduced upon a stationary condition of crime at a time when there is less increase of crime than there was at the period when the Government thought there was not sufficient for proposing coercion? What were the facts of the case in 1870? The House of Commons almost unanimously passed that Act.¹ There were many Members from Ireland at that time representing popular constituencies. Yet many of them supported the Bill, while not above 12 of them voted against it. It was an accepted Bill: but this Bill, for which such urgency has been pleaded and all the liberties of the House of Commons suppressed, is opposed by a large minority of this House, and, as far as I can judge, a minority not likely to decrease. I say that it is plain by the most unequivocal and conclusive evidence, that if we have any sort of regard to the traditions of liberty or of Parliamentary usage, there is not to be alleged in support of the present measure, even if we consider it as a Coercion Bill of the old stamp—there is not to be alleged any of the justification which has always by previous Parliaments, and even by previous Governments, been considered essential to warrant the invasion of the liberties of the people, and to warrant a slight—if not an insult—to Ireland. Had this Bill been simply a Crimes Bill, I venture to give a confident opinion that the forty odd nights which have been spent upon it would have been reduced three-fourths. But it is not a Crimes Bill to which this persistent opposition has been offered. It is a Bill of the new fashion, of the new Coercion, which has now received, for the first time, the support of a majority of the House of Commons.

¹ The Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act.

I must confess I resent the statements sometimes made, impugning our conduct as opponents of the Bill, that we have done the same thing ourselves. We have not done the same thing ourselves. I do not raise the question whether what we have done is right or wrong. Fifteen months ago I publicly confessed in the House the failure of what we did, and I urged Parliament to take a better and a wiser course. If there be those who have been parties to former Bills, and who think those Bills to be of the same character as the present Bill, they are perfectly justified in saying so; but we are entitled to lodge an earnest and warm protest against that assertion, because the Bill we have now before us is of a character entirely different. But, now, to some extent the admission is made that the Bill is of a different character. The answer made by the Government is this—"True, we have put forward some rather staggering proposals, but then look at our safeguards." Now, what are these safeguards? One of the most extraordinary and unprecedented proposals ever made to Parliament in this country—such a proposal as, I believe, no Tory Government ever ventured to make in the days before the passing of the Reform Act—is that which makes the Viceroy of Ireland—that is to say, the right hon. gentleman opposite, the Chief Secretary of Ireland, if he is a Cabinet Minister and the Viceroy is not—which makes the Chief Secretary the master of the whole law and of the right of association in Ireland.

It is alleged that there is an admirable safeguard, and the safeguard is that there may be an appeal to this House. Well, the House must be summoned if it was not sitting. That argument may have some effect with those who are greatly satisfied with the manner in which the majority of the House has estimated the value of Irish liberties. This appeal appears to us to be of a very moderate value indeed; but whatever it is, it is nothing but a partial remedy applicable to the proposal in its altogether novel form, and constituting, it appears to me, an outrage on the principle of public freedom. I am surprised at the boldness of the right hon. gentleman, the Chief Secretary, though I am bound to admit that his boldness has modified

very considerably. I was surprised when he claimed, as a very important safeguard, the fact that some of the provisions¹ which Parliament adopted in 1881, and put in motion directly and by its own authority over Ireland, are now made dependent upon the right hon. gentleman thinking them necessary. That is a difference which the right hon. gentleman may think important, but which, in my opinion, was hardly worth being even mentioned in debate.

It is admitted, then, that this Bill contains the gravest novelties. How stands the case? I have the words of the right hon. gentleman, the late Attorney-General for Ireland,² as I took them down at the time; and I at once made them the subject of notice to my right hon. friend the Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and the hon. and learned gentleman the Member for South Hackney.³ I said to them—We have now got an admission which, at any rate, is of the greatest value. The words were these—

“There is no offence punishable under this Act except such as is already a felony or misdemeanour—”

that is what I should have called a Crimes Act---

“or as is constituted an offence under the second clause of this Bill dealing with intimidation.”

I am not absolutely certain as to the word “second”; but it is immaterial, as the second clause did deal with intimidation. We, therefore, have it upon the declaration of the Government—at last the clear and unequivocal declaration of the Government—that offences are constituted under the clause of this Bill dealing with intimidation which were not criminal offences before. Therefore, our original allegation against the Bill was justified.

What was the defence set up by the right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary? It was a defence with regard to which I hardly could have supposed for a moment that it would impose upon any portion of the House, and it was a

¹ In the Protection of Person and Property Act, and the Peace Preservation (Ireland) Act.

² Mr Holmes.

³ Sir Charles Russell.

defence entirely destructive of the position of his right hon. and learned colleague, the late Attorney-General for Ireland, because it amounted to a denial of what that right hon. and learned gentleman had said. The right hon. and learned late Attorney-General had told us that there were acts which were constituted offences under the clause of this Bill dealing with intimidation. He used these words. The right hon. gentleman shakes his head, but I have witnesses to sustain me in my allegation, and the right hon. and learned gentleman, the late Attorney-General, though the matter has been debated in Parliament, has had the good sense and good faith not to deny it. New offences are constituted. We have it out of the mouth of the Government itself—it is too late to make denial. What was the expedient to which the right hon. gentleman resorted? He said that certain words in the beginning of the Clause enacted that the conspiracy must be a conspiracy of a nature now punishable by law, and he actually relied upon those words to overturn his own Attorney-General. Does not the right hon. gentleman suppose we are aware that there are two things in question—one the nature and manner of the agreement which is the conspiracy, and the other the nature of the acts to which the agreement refers? The nature of the agreement, I grant you, must be the same as under the present law, and that is the effect of the words quoted by the right hon. gentleman: but the acts with respect to which the agreement is to be made are changed by this Bill. And what are they? They are acts of exclusive dealing, which are thus defined:—

“To compel or induce any person or persons either not to fulfil his or their obligations, or not to let, hire, use, or occupy any land, or not to deal with, work for, or hire any person or persons in the ordinary course of trade, business, or occupation, or to interfere with the administration of the law.”

Now, these words are a comprehensive description of what is known as “exclusive dealing.” Exclusive dealing, I am sorry to say, is very largely practised in this country, and exclusive dealing is also cruelly practised in Ireland towards any Protestant who is disposed to show himself a Home Ruler. A

short time ago I gave an instance of an Irish clergyman who was reduced to beggary for the offence of being a Home Ruler, and after I mentioned that case I immediately received in my correspondence offers from Ireland to make me acquainted with the particulars of many other cases. But whatever the exclusive dealing may be, there are two things to be said of it—it is far more pardonable on the part of the poor and the weak than on the part of the great, the rich, and the powerful; and, secondly, it has never been a crime by our law. It is a social evil; it is a mischief which ought to be brought to a close by the passing of sound laws, and by the progress of manners and civilisation; but it ought not to be constituted a crime. At any rate, if it is to be constituted a crime, it ought to be so constituted impartially and universally. But you would not dare to lift a finger in defence of such provisions for England and Scotland. However rampant exclusive dealing might become amongst us, you know very well you would have to look on in silence and in apparent indifference.

I have a word to say as to the favourite doctrine of those who are opposed to our policy of giving autonomy to Ireland. Their favourite doctrine is this—that Ireland ought not to have any legislative assembly of its own; but ought to enjoy equal rights with the rest of the kingdom under a united Parliament. I wish to apply this test of equal rights under a united Parliament to the matter that is now before us. I say that in England, Scotland, and Wales any man is free to induce as much as he likes, and to combine with others in inducing other persons—

“Not to fulfil his or their legal obligations, or not to let, hire, use, or occupy any land, or not to deal with, work for, or hire any person or persons in the ordinary course of trade, business, or occupation.”

These are rights of Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Welshmen, which you are going to deny to Irishmen, and having denied them, you are going to say that Ireland ought not to have a separate Legislative Assembly of her own because she is blessed with the privilege of enjoying equal rights with those enjoyed by the other parts of the United Kingdom.

Now, this touches a point which it is important should be made clear. An Amendment was moved with the object of extending the immunities granted to Trade Unions in England to tenants in Ireland. It was proposed to grant the Irish tenant, in respect of his holding, the same description of immunity as is now enjoyed by a member of a Trade Union if he does not fulfil his obligations to his employer in the course of any dispute connected with his trade. I am at present making no complaint of the rejection of that Amendment, because I admit that there are certain differences between the cases of the tenant in Ireland and the workman in England. But my hon. and learned friend the late Attorney-General¹ moved an Amendment providing that no person or persons doing any of the things mentioned in the clause should be chargeable with conspiracy in respect of any such act, unless such act would, if done by one person alone, be punishable as a crime. This is the right enjoyed by every member of a Trade Union in England and Scotland in regard to labour contracts, and I say that this same right ought to be extended to the tenants of Ireland. But this right, which was deliberately, and, I believe, at last unanimously, given to England and Scotland, is now denied to Ireland.

I now desire to refer to Clauses 6 and 7, which, with Clause 2, make up the parts of a great plan—I am inclined to call it a great conspiracy—against the right of association in Ireland. The right of association to induce exclusive dealing is struck at by Clause 2, and the right of association for almost any public purpose—so large and elastic are the words of Clauses 6 and 7—is placed in the hand of the right hon. gentleman opposite. If I were an Irishman and I joined a political association, it would be for the right hon. gentleman to say whether I became a criminal by that act. I am not to be permitted to bring him into Court, to challenge him to a contest in which he would have all the advantage of public administrative authority; I am not to be permitted to obtain even publicity for the motives of his proceedings which

may remain hidden away in his own breast; it is for him, dispensing with judge, jury, counsel, and witnesses, to say whether I am a criminal or not. Am I then not justified, after what I have said, in stating that there are two kinds of Coercion—the old and the new—and that the new Coercion is, in the term of art, no doubt, a vast improvement, for it is more drastic, it is more insidious, it is more searching and far-reaching? It goes beyond all the powers that were ever possessed by the framers of the old Coercion Bills; and it strikes at the very root of public right in that one grand subject of association, which is the heart and pith of public right for a country like Ireland, and to withdraw which is fatal to its public liberty.

My contentions, then, are these:—There are no facts at all to justify, in the slightest degree, one even of the old-fashioned Coercion Bills, which are no more to be compared with the present Coercion Bill than a watch of the time of Queen Elizabeth is to be compared with the best watch manufactured by Mr. Dent to-day or yesterday, or than a coach of the time of Queen Elizabeth is to be compared with the best coach manufactured at the present day. There are no facts to justify one of the old-fashioned Coercion Bills; and if that process is to be performed by the Government which has been spontaneously performed by every previous Government at the earlier stages of the discussions on these painful matters, it has got to be performed by them now under challenge, and, for the first time, on the third reading. If there are no facts to justify the old Coercion Bills, much less are there facts to justify the new, which creates new crime, for I would rather have a hundred new crimes than have even one new crime carried over to the secret and irresponsible cognisance of the Minister sitting in secret, subject to all the political influences which must naturally act upon him, and convert him into a substitute for the judicial tribunals of the country, and the rights enjoyed by us all before those tribunals.

I beg to remind the House of what I have said—so far at least as I am able to judge, this Coercion Bill is the alternative

to a large measure of autonomy for Ireland. We are not going to have a Coercion Bill in Ireland because Ireland is disturbed, but because we have refused to give Ireland the management of strictly and properly Irish affairs. I understand that basis of fact. You have refused it, the majority of the constituencies—that is to say, of the English constituencies—out-numbering the rest, and constituting the lawful and constitutional majority in Parliament; but do not disguise the consequences. We predicted at the time when the Irish Government Bill of last year was introduced, according to the best of our forethought, that there was no alternative but coercion, and no alternative but a new and sterner form of coercion. Many of those who conscientiously objected to our course indignantly denied the justice of that prediction, and declared in this House, while announcing their objections to that measure, that they retained all their old and all their rooted aversion to Coercion Bills for limiting Irish liberty and crimes. What has become of all those protestations? With the single exception of Sir George Trevelyan,¹ and one or two other hon. members, I am sorry to say that the predictions have been fulfilled, not only in the degree, but very far beyond the degree in which I could have supposed it possible that they would have received fulfilment, and the country will have to be made to understand that the real, and the true, and the only option before it is between a just and liberal autonomy for Ireland, wisely regulated in details, but founded on the great principles that you have applied throughout your Empire, and a system of Coercion on the other side more grievous than any that has yet been put forward—more grievous, sir, not only by the creation of new crimes, not only by substituting executive discretion or indiscretion for the regular and public action of the tribunals in respect of the most sacred rights, but likewise by that which of all others is most odious among the provisions of this Bill, the stamp of permanency which you have chosen to institute, thereby adopting the principle of what on all former occasions has

¹ See p. 243.

been recognised as a painful and a temporary necessity, of which Parliament would not allow the existence except for the shortest period, and with a regular provision for resuming its consideration. But now the rule—the established state of things for Ireland—is to be this permanent Bill, as an exemplification of the equal laws and equal rights enjoyed by Ireland under the blessed Bill now before us.

Why, sir, are we to make this grievous mischoice? Is the state of the country such as you now have it, such as you are asserting it by the overwhelming force of a Government majority, so precious and so valuable in your eyes? What I conceive to be the principle of old Constitutional struggles is that the resisting Party—what would then be called the obstructing Party—were usually fighting for something that, at any rate, even if the time had come for it to pass away, was more or less great and noble in itself. Sometimes it was the Protestant religion, sometimes it was the Establishment of Church and State. On the first Reform Bill, wise men, many very wise men, said—"Beware how you interfere with the representative system, which has maintained more uniformity than you find in any other country in the civilised world." Even in the miserable controversy, as we may now call it, on the Corn Laws, multitudes of advocates of the Corn Laws when that controversy began, conscientiously believed, however erroneously, that they were maintaining a system by means of which the scale of subsistence and of remuneration for the British labourer was maintained at a higher rate, and that he would lose these advantages. There was always, at any rate, some decent, sometimes even some honourable or some glorious, illusion for which those opponents were contending.

What are you contending for? Is there one who will rise from that bench who will say that the state of the case between England and Ireland for seven hundred years of British mastery, is anything but upon the whole a discredit, misery, and shame? ["No."] That is a curiosity which I should like to store up in a museum. Are there any

in the House who consider that the great and noble political genius of England, which has spread her fame throughout the world, which has earned for her honour and praise even from enemies, which has made her a rallying-point for those who are struggling for their freedom—that this great and noble genius, which everywhere but in Ireland has achieved such glorious works, may likewise point to Ireland and say—"In a case where the strong had to deal with the weak, where Ireland was at no time strong enough to assert herself against me, where I had my own way so far as Imperial power could give it, how well can I look at the result?" In the whole Empire, spread throughout the world, there is but a portion—I will not enter now into a controverted question with respect to the great mass of our Oriental fellow-subjects, though for my part I should be ready to make the assertion for them—but there is not a piece of the Queen's Dominions, not so much as a square yard, which she holds by force; but she holds Ireland by force. After seven hundred years of mastery you have not yet learned that mastery carries with it responsibility.

If I am to descend from higher motives, I own there are two considerations of a very practical character which come home to my mind, and they appear to me perfectly undeniable; first of all, that the present system of Irish government is the cause of enormous charge to this country. I have had something to do with the finances of this country, and I do not hesitate to say that millions a year are to be saved by substituting a sound for an unsound system in the government of Ireland—that is, by granting to Ireland a free, though a guarded, liberty of managing her own concerns. The expenditure of vast sums of money might be saved which is now used for the purpose of creating and aggravating discontent, which grows year by year with the increase of civilisation and with the general decrease of crime. I do not understand why it is so precious in your eyes. I do not suppose that any one will deny that Ireland and Irish affairs are the great cause of the melancholy, lamentable, and disgraceful paralysis

of Parliament. There I imagine we are all unanimous; but you cling to that miserable mischief as if it were a treasure and a delight. I cannot understand it. You know that the literature of the world is against you. ["No."] Will the hon. gentleman, whom I have not the honour of seeing, have the kindness to mention to me a single author in European literature who has reviewed the relations between England and Ireland, and the history of those relations, and who says that their condition is honourable to England? I do not understand him to answer the challenge. But, perhaps, what he means is not that the literature of the world—which is the expression of its permanent judgment in these matters—is not against us, but that the literature of the world is quite wrong. Gentlemen opposite have the faculty of wrapping themselves up in a self-content of that nature. To me I confess it is one of the most grievous and painful considerations that I know. I do not speak of newspapers, because I presume that upon all subjects there will be great varieties in the mere momentary opinion of the day. I have not intentionally exaggerated; I have sought to inform myself, and so far as I am able to judge, whereas there were men who would have defended the conduct of Austria in Italy, and whereas there were even men who would have defended the conduct of Russia in Poland, you will hardly find—I have never known yet that you would find in a single case—a writer worthy of bearing that name who has—as I have said—reviewed the case between England and Ireland, and who is ready to give you the benefit of his support.

There is a broad and marked distinction between this case and the other great Constitutional struggles in which the party opposite has in numberless times past gallantly engaged and has uniformly been defeated—there is this one very broad and marked distinction, that in this case I do not understand what it is they profess to be fighting for. I see that they profess to be fighting for one thing at least—namely, the union of the Empire—in which we are most desirous to join, and in which we think it as ridiculous to charge disunion upon us as they think it ridiculous to charge disunion upon

them. In these things we ought to be united. In this present controversy they appear to me to be fighting for something which means nothing but hatred between the two countries, which means nothing but to produce waste of public treasure, which means nothing but stopping the transaction of your own vital and necessary business; and, finally, which means nothing but incurring the judgment and condemnation of the civilised world. Sir, these things cannot last. In the faith that they will not last, and in the faith that every manful protest will tend to bring them nearer the day of their doom. I move the rejection of this Bill.

THE QUEEN'S REIGN

HAWARDEN, AUGUST 30, 1887

The Queen's Jubilee, which fell on June 21st of this year, was universally celebrated throughout the country. Mr. Gladstone entertained all the parishioners of Hawarden of the same age as Her Majesty (68), and those older.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,—
You are all well acquainted with the occasion that has brought us together. It is the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, and perhaps this is one of the closing operations connected with it. The whole country has long been full of the idea and busy with the different schemes and the different efforts of the loyal people of Great Britain to commemorate the occasion as it deserved. So we can consider a little not only what the thing is in itself, but how it has been received.

Now this is not the first Jubilee in our history. I will not go any further back than to the one immediately before. Some of us who are here present, and among the number myself, had come into this world before the last Jubilee—the Jubilee of George III.—but were hardly of years sufficient to enable us to take any account of it personally for ourselves. But I have endeavoured to ascertain what kind of a Jubilee that was, and it is pretty plain to me that it was only in a very narrow and qualified sense that it could be called a Jubilee of the nation. It was a Jubilee of the great folks; it was a Jubilee of corporations and of authorities; it was a Jubilee of the upper classes, and there was a certain, but a very limited, amount of popular manifestations. The truth is, my friends, that it was hardly a time for the Jubilee. It was a time when, owing to a long war, the people were reduced to a condition in which it was much harder than it now is to keep body and soul together.



I once heard, within a few yards of the place where I now address you, a most impressive discourse delivered by one of your old neighbours who might almost have been alive to-day—one of the old Mancott miners, who had worked in the pits seventy or eighty years ago, and who lived until the time when efforts were made to open those pits again. His name was Edwards, I think Joseph Edwards. He came to a dinner given by Sir Stephen Glynne to those miners, and, to the surprise of everybody, after dinner he got up and delivered a speech. It was admirably delivered; it was short, and it was one of the most impressive speeches I ever heard. He described the condition of the labouring population at the time when he was young and began to work. He told us what was then the price of corn, what was then the price of potatoes, and what was then the rate of wages—the rate of wages for miners, who generally have a rate of wages somewhat higher than that of the agricultural population among whom they live. I assure you that it was nothing less than shocking and frightful to hear the account he gave of the condition of the people of England at the time, when, forsooth, there was a Jubilee of the reign of George III.; and if you go further back than that, there is in this park a very curious stone that some of you may have seen, though it is in an out-of-the-way spot, engraved in the time of Sir John Glynne, describing the condition of the people at that time,¹ stating the price of grain, stating the activity of many charitable persons, but ending with some such painful words as these—"The poor starved and were hanged."

Well now, my friends, the condition of men, and especially the condition of the mass of mankind, has always been and may long continue to be in all parts of the world, certainly in this part of the world, a condition of care, of difficulty, and, to some extent, of want. But, at the same time, the Jubilee for which we have met is not like the Jubilee of George III. The recollections that it calls up are not like those recollections. It is not a period in which the means of the people have been stinted; in which industry has been restrained and cramped and

fettered by bad legislation ; in which the distance, always apt to widen too much, between rich and poor, has been sadly and wofully increased. The period of the last fifty years, particularly since Her Majesty, God bless her, came to the throne, has been a period marked by changes the very reverse of all those to which I have referred. In those days even the representation of the people in Parliament, which was their security for good government—even the representation of the people in Parliament was, when compared with what it now is, little better than a name. I do not say it was of no value. It was of very great value ; but it was marred and cramped in a hundred ways so as to fall far short of what it was originally designed to be, and one of the great series of operations which have marked the last fifty or sixty years has been the most thorough, the most profound and searching change in the whole system of representation, so that now, with few exceptions, every man in the country who has a house over his head and who has a family around him takes his share in and gives his vote for the choice of those who are to make the laws by which he is to be governed. Moreover, he gives that vote in a manner which defends him from the intimidation of those who might try to influence his choice unduly, because he gives it under the protection of secrecy, not because he can escape responsibility, for he cannot escape responsibility to his conscience and to his God, but from unjust measures to injure him in the free exercise of the franchise. From all this the law effectually defends him.

This is one important change upon which you have reason to congratulate yourselves, for from henceforward it must be said that if bad laws are made, if foolish things are done, as they may be done sometimes, and will be done—nay, I am sorry to say, in my opinion, in this very year have been done—yet they are not incurable, and being done it is the nation itself that must lay to heart the responsibility of their being done, for they are done by men whom the nation chose, and if they have not fulfilled the trust they received in a wise and just manner, it will be for the nation on the very next occasion to show its sense of the failure of their duty, and to take care to repose that

trust in worthier and better hands. But I now pass to the next subject.

We are now upon the brighter aspect of public affairs. I will tell you another great change. Another great change is this, that at the time when I was born, and the time when some of you were born, the list of offences for which men and women, ay, and children, were liable to be hanged, was an awful list, and I am not sure that there were not between two and three hundred offences of that kind. This is most certainly the fact, that there were some of them which were offences which the people would now, in the case of a boy or a girl, hardly think of punishing with a smart corporal chastisement. All those laws have been abrogated and repealed, and you may say that there is nothing, or next to nothing, besides treason and deliberate murder, for which any man can now lose his life, and there is not one man hanged now for twenty that used to be hanged, and the hanging of children, which occasionally happened, and which then did not shock the public conscience, is a thing that under no circumstances and conditions would now be possible, because people know that the responsibility of a child is not a responsibility that ought to be enforced by that awful infliction. They have taken away the great bulk of the laws against crime—that is to say, the severe and crushing penalties, and substituted milder and more limited and more hopeful penalties, and instead of putting men in prison, where they could learn nothing but to become hardened in vice and more disposed to crime, they endeavour now so to regulate their prisons as to give to any one who may be so disposed a chance of improvement and reformation. But when these laws began to be abolished and mitigated there were a parcel of people in the country, as there are always a parcel of people, who are afraid of useful and beneficent changes, and who set before you all manner of bugbears, and conjure before you all kinds of sorrows which many honestly but foolishly think will happen. It was very plausible to say if you take away all these laws against sheep-stealing, against cutting young trees in plantations, if you make it no longer a capital offence to steal

the value of 5s. in a dwelling-house, all people will become thieves, and respectable people will find the country intolerable to live in. Those are the notions that prevailed, and corresponding follies were always in the course of being committed.

What has been the result? The result has been this, that while you have altered your laws, softened your penalties, told the criminal that he is not to despair but to hope, helped him to become a reformed and altered character, you have done all that, and instead of producing increased crime you have an enormous diminution of crime. I will not enter into figures. Happily, it is one of the notorious facts of the day that the proportion of criminals in this population of England, Scotland, and Ireland has enormously diminished in connection with, and undoubtedly in part in consequence of, that mitigation of the criminal law which is one of the great blessings that decorate with a golden, and better than golden, splendour the memory of the reign of Queen Victoria.

I mention these two things to you, and I will mention one more. As I told you, when old Joseph Edwards described to us the price of wheat—and I should be afraid almost from memory to mention what it was—I am quite sure of this, it represented something like 120s. to 140s. for a quarter of wheat, and the price of a quarter of wheat, and mostly better wheat, now is very little over 30s. Well, that price was not a price due to the inflictions of Divine Providence. It was a price due in the main and principal degree to the follies of men; it was due to bad legislation; it was due to dictating from whence corn might come into the country, and to treating the coming of corn into the country as if it was a thing that might produce the most awful and inconvenient consequences; and so in the same way everything that the people wanted, everything that could be considered a comfort of life, was without exception subjected to a heavy taxation. What was the case with tea within my recollection? Sixty or seventy years ago you could get no decent tea under 8s. per pound. What was the case with sugar? Why, sugar was, I will venture to say, certainly not less than four times

the price that it is now. There are some few things that are dearer now than sixty or seventy years ago. Meat is dearer. Why is meat dearer? Not because bad laws have made it dearer. You are drawing meat from every quarter of the world, and there is no barrier interposed by law; your Custom Houses do not levy a farthing upon it. Whatever meat mankind can grow is at your disposal; and if it is dearer, it is not because there is less of it: it is because, thank God, there are ten times more mouths open to eat it, ten times more people capable of buying it and of competing for it; of course with the consequence that always follows when a greater number of people compete for a thing—their competition raises the price. However, I am thankful to say that, while the law has been at work in every single case except the article of spirits—and that is governed by special circumstances—while the law has given the fullest and freest access to every useful commodity, to everything that can feed and clothe and comfort, and while, so far as depends upon law, all these things are cheaper, all groceries are cheaper, all clothing is far cheaper—I do not think clothing now costs half what it did when I was a boy—I mean supposing the quality to be the same, but the quality is better as well as the money price reduced—while these things have been taking place I am thankful to say that if our old friend Joseph Edwards could hear us to-day, and you could compare the rate of wages which the miner got in his time with the rate he gets now, or, again, if you took the rate of wages of the agricultural labourer in this district, which is very little short of 100 per cent. better than it was when I became acquainted with this district by marrying my wife—why, gentlemen, these are great and blessed changes. Difficulties will remain; there will always be people poor, and I am afraid always people very poor. There will always be pressure on a considerable part of the population. There will always be a great call for prudence and a great call for effort, and in many cases perhaps great difficulty even with prudence and effort in keeping the head well above water.

I am not saying that there is nothing yet to do. There is, I

believe, a great deal yet to do. The Legislature has an enormous work before it, and I feel a full persuasion that before long the Legislature will set about that work in good earnest, but it is a duty to be thankful for those mercies which God has been pleased to bestow upon us. It is a mercy, it is an advantage that the population are better represented, are more free, have fewer criminals, are better fed, better clothed, and better housed—and that by a great deal—than they were fifty years ago, and that the great mass of these happy and blessed changes is associated with the name and action of the Queen.

It is associated with the name and the action of the Queen ; and I will only say of her three things. I am afraid the weather which has stood our friend so long is for once going to become a little gloomy, and the skies are beginning to frown, but I may say a few words to you about Her Majesty herself. You will remember that it is the high function of the Sovereign in this country to give her consent to Bills presented to her by the Houses of Parliament, and no Bill can become law without her consent. It might be very difficult in these days when the Houses of Parliament are in earnest, it might be very difficult for the Sovereign absolutely to refuse. But then there is such a thing as a grudging consent, and there have been good laws in this and other countries to which at times Sovereigns have consented, not because they liked the good laws, but because they could not help themselves. That has not been the case with the Queen. The whole of these beneficial changes upon which I have been dwelling, and the whole of a multitude of other beneficial changes with which I cannot now detain you, are laws to which Her Majesty, as is well known, and as I have had more opportunity of knowing than many perhaps who now hear me—to which Her Majesty has given not a forced, nor a grudging, but a willing consent, and has thereby made herself the prime benefactor of the country. After that it is little to say of such a Sovereign, but it is an important thing to say, that all the principles of the Constitution have been observed by the Queen through the

long years of her reign in a manner more perfect than has ever been known in the time of any former Sovereign. In point of fact it is not too much to say that the historian in future days, when he comes to write an account of this period in which we have lived, will point to the reign of Queen Victoria as the time in which the Sovereign in this country came finally and fully to understand the constitutional position and the great and noble conditions on which a free people can be governed, and not only to understand them but to accept them and to act upon them, from the day when Lord Melbourne, her first Prime Minister, earned honour from his countrymen for the fidelity with which he made known to her all the best lessons of the past Royal practice, down to the day on which we are now speaking.

Nor, be assured, is it a slight matter that we speak, as almost all persons speaking of this Jubilee have felt themselves compelled to speak—it is no slight matter that we refer to when we mention the example of life and manners that has been set by the Queen from first to last. Alas, if we go back beyond a certain time, and that not so very distant, in the history of the human race, or in the history of this great kingdom, we find a period when for long series together of one monarch after another the Court and the immediate surrounding of the throne, instead of being an example of Christian life to the rest of the country, was an example of everything that a Christian should not do, everything bad, everything profligate, everything corrupt, everything that would shock a decent householder, father or mother, to mention before children. These things have found in other days their home about and upon the throne, and in the precincts of the Court. Not so with Queen Victoria. Under her no form of evil has been permitted within the august precincts of Windsor Castle, or of her other palaces, to present its possibly to some seductive, but yet loathsome and abominable, features, and the people have been able to say that in the various lines and walks and works of duty those who have a humble lot and a contracted sphere have been able to borrow encouragement and instruction from

the example of her whom it has pleased God to place at the head of society.

Now I have said quite enough for this occasion, and I think enough to justify me in reminding you that although a Jubilee may be regarded as an affair of form and ceremony, there is a great deal more than form and ceremony in this Jubilee. It invites us and compels us to cast our thoughts backward over that long series of years with which we are almost all of us familiar, and it imposes upon us the duty of deep thankfulness to the Almighty, who in these late days, when our history is so long, and when some might have thought that our nation and our constitution have grown old, has given us as a people a renovated youth; who has inspired us with renewed activity and with buoyant hope; who has conducted us thus far upon the road to improvement and advancement in the pursuit, not of false but of true human happiness; who has made the laws of this country no longer odious, no longer suspected, but dear to the people at large, and who has thereby encouraged us—I will not say much of encouragement to men of my age, whose life is in the past more than in the future—it has encouraged all those who are grown up or coming on, who are in the first glow of youth, or in the prime and vigour of manhood, to persevere and endeavour to make the coming years if they can, not worse, but better than those which have gone by. I beseech you, if you owe the debt of gratitude to the Queen for that which I have described, for her hearty concurrence in the work of public progress and improvement, for the admirable public example which her life has uniformly set, for her thorough comprehension of the true conditions of the great covenant between the throne and the people—if you owe her a debt of gratitude for these, may I say to you try to acknowledge that debt by remembering her in your prayers. Depend upon it that when St. Paul enjoined¹ that prayers should be made for all men, and gave the commanding and the leading place to prayers for

¹ First Epistle to Timothy, ii. 1-2.

kings and all in authority, St. Paul spoke the language, not only of religion, but of the most profound social justice and human common sense. Do not imagine that because in this world some live in greater splendour and greater enjoyment than others, they therefore live free of temptation, so as not to need the prayers of their fellow-Christians. Depend upon it, the higher placed one is in society the greater are his difficulties, and the more subtle the temptations that surround his path, and that which is true as we rise from rank to rank is not least of all, but most of all, true when we come to the elevated and august position of the Sovereign, who as a Sovereign, more than any one among her subjects, needs the support which the prayers and the intercessions of her subjects offered for her to her Saviour can afford. Forgive me for entreating you not to forget that duty; not to forget that simple mode, at the command of all, in which every one who thinks the Queen has nobly done her duty to them may perform a great and beneficial duty to her and for her.

Now, my friends, I will only conclude by assuring you that it is to me, and not to me alone, but to my wife, and not to my wife and to me alone, but to my whole family down to the little grandchildren who are here partaking of our joy upon this festivity—it is a matter of the deepest and sincerest pleasure to meet you on this occasion. We cordially wish to you every comfort and consolation that can sustain you, as I trust it will sustain my wife and myself in declining years. We trust that your hopes may brighten as the remainder of your days must shorten. We offer to you our best and heartiest wishes, and we entreat you to join us in the few but cordial words—words that can never lose their depth of meaning—May God save and bless the Queen !

MITCHELSTOWN

HOUSE OF COMMONS, SEPTEMBER 12, 1887

On September 9th, a Nationalist meeting was held at Mitchelstown. There was a conflict between the police and the people, in which one man was killed and two fatally wounded. On the motion to go into Committee on the Appropriation Bill, Sir William Harcourt called the attention of the House to the subject.

I THINK, sir, it was naturally to be expected that this debate should mainly direct itself towards the distressing circumstances of the recent occurrence at Mitchelstown; but, notwithstanding this, I am strongly of opinion, and indeed I think the hon. and learned gentleman¹ who has just sat down will probably not dissent from that opinion, that my right hon. friend,² the Member for Derby, has performed a public service in drawing the attention of the House to this subject, and in giving to the House the great advantage of a very full, a very clear, and a very weighty account of the authorities bearing on the subject of public meetings under the Common Law, and likewise of calling attention not only to the facts of the Ennis case,³ but, what is still more important, to the doctrines in connection with which these facts are to be judged. The right hon. gentleman,⁴ the Chief Secretary for Ireland, sat down after saying that he and his Government would persevere in their endeavours to bring about tranquillity in Ireland by a firm administration of the law and by the removal not of grievances—for there were none——

MR BALFOUR—Injustice was my word.

MR GLADSTONE—Oh, I beg pardon; I am much obliged for the correction, but I see no difference. Still it is much

¹ Mr Fisher.

² Sir William Harcourt.

³ A Nationalist meeting called for September 4th was proclaimed by the Lord-Lieutenant.

⁴ Mr A. J. Balfour.

better to be verbally correct. The right hon. gentleman said that he was aware that he would find nothing but opposition from this side of the House in his endeavours. I do not intend to dwell on that somewhat invidious remark; but I must protest against it. I must say that whenever Her Majesty's Government have made a proposal which appeared to us in the slightest degree beneficial to the people of Ireland we have hailed that proposal, and we have done all in our power to forward it; and when they have been engaged, as we think, during the present year in a course most unwise and most unconstitutional, and likely to disturb and break up the foundations of social order in that country, we have done everything that was in our power, by the use of most earnest and energetic language, to encourage strict obedience to the law. I will venture to tell the right hon. gentleman that I believe our respectful advice to the people of Ireland has been of more use in procuring obedience to the law than all your Crimes Acts and your constabulary, managed as it was at Mitchelstown. I have spoken of the management of the constabulary at Mitchelstown, and I hope that we shall hear in the course of time much more on that subject. But undoubtedly one point raised by the senior Member for Northampton¹ appeared to me to deserve the notice of the right hon. gentleman. The first body of police to escort the reporter consisted of twenty-two men. I think that number was given in *The Standard* newspaper; but I am not quite certain. There were fifty constables in the second body. We do not understand that they were under any command or any responsible guidance whatever. If this is so, the circumstance is so strange that I cannot take it for granted; but undoubtedly the accounts given in the newspapers tend to that belief, and I hope we shall have some explanation on the subject.

The point, however, on which I wish to speak and to draw the attention of the House is the question raised by my right hon. friend, the Member for Derby. My right hon. friend has said that it appears to him that the prohibition of the meeting

¹ Mr Labouchere.

at Ennis was an invasion of public liberty. He has supported himself by references to the very highest authorities. Those authorities are not lawyers who might be supposed to be tainted with Liberal or ultra-Liberal doctrines. On the contrary, my right hon. friend relied on many other distinguished names, above all, on the eminent and very distinguished name of Lord Eldon,¹—I may say, considering Lord Eldon as lawyer and not as statesman, the illustrious name of Lord Eldon—as a very great lawyer whose conscience was keenly alive on the subject of law. Well, sir, it seems to be quite clear, upon the doctrine of Lord Eldon, that it is impossible to justify the proclamation of the Ennis meeting. Lord Eldon laid it down that if a meeting were treasonable, that was a reason, no doubt, for prohibiting and preventing it; if it were dangerous to the public peace, that was a reason for prohibiting and preventing it. But, then, that means proximate danger to the public peace, and not a speculative danger, which it is within the discretion of an official to imagine and to suggest. To my astonishment the right hon. gentleman, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, bracing up all his energies to the business he had in hand, proceeded with self-confidence to denounce the speech of my right hon. friend, the Member for Derby, bristling with legal authorities throughout, as empty and hollow, and to pass by entirely the discussion and the bearing those authorities had upon the question of the proclamation of the Ennis meeting.

What is the course taken by the right hon. gentleman? A simple *tu quoque*, neither more nor less. In a matter of mere politics, the *tu quoque* argument is usually the resort of persons who are in great difficulties. But in a matter of law it is absurd to suppose that in this House, when you appeal to great legal authorities and standards, you are liable to be overthrown, by saying—Why, you did it! What does it signify—what does it signify for the purpose in view? It may signify a good deal for the purpose of throwing blame

¹ As Lord Chancellor, he had advised the Government concerning the Peterloo meeting in 1819.

upon us. I do not wish to escape from that blame; but it is absurd and preposterous, and not to be tolerated in a man who is a Minister of the Crown, that when it is said the law has been tampered with and infringed, he is to say—You did it. That is no argument whatever. It is a fresh accusation, and as a fresh accusation may deserve a good deal of attention. Let us look at this fresh accusation. What was it? I heard the words of the right hon. gentleman, and the words were these:—that Lord Spencer¹ and Mr Forster² had in 130 cases at least used those powers against public meetings.

MR BALFOUR—I said Mr Forster in 130 cases, to which you must add all the cases in which Lord Spencer used them subsequently.

MR GLADSTONE—That, sir, was not the original statement of the right hon. gentleman. There were, he said, 130 cases. Let us well understand this. Lord Spencer has nothing at all to do with the matter, except as a single case. I was prepared to meet the right hon. gentleman, on the part of Lord Spencer and the Government at that period, with a simple denial, and with regard to that single case I believe that denial applies. But the right hon. gentleman has narrowed his proposition so much that I will not put it upon that part of the question. Well, there were 130 cases from Mr Forster. On a challenge from the hon. Member for Cork³ to explain whether these were public meetings for discussion or not, the 130 cases sank down to 30—a considerable collapse in the case of a statement made by a gentleman who speaks with all the facilities of official information. After that collapse there remained 30 cases, and, for my part, I must say I am totally unaware of any act of the description the right. hon. gentleman has given us. Mr Forster is not here to speak for himself; I have no power of communication at the moment with any one who can speak for him; but all I can say is this, that whether we have this or not—and I do not admit that Mr Forster did it until I have some clear account

¹ Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1882-85.

² Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1880-82.

³ Mr Parnell.

of what he did—it has no bearing whatever on the legality of the proceeding. If we have tampered with the law, so much the worse, and so much the more necessary it is that the practice of the Executive should be brought back to the law. We have a Minister deliberately going by the discussion of the law, and deliberately setting aside, deliberately describing, in fact, as hollow and unreal, a speech made up in great part of citations from the highest legal authorities, showing what the true legal doctrine was, and resting himself upon an accusation made against a former Government, as if it were possible that the practice of former Governments combined with the practice of his Government could make legal that which is in itself illegal. Therefore, I want to know whether that is really to be the ground of defence, or whether the Government are prepared to grapple with the authorities laid down by my right hon. friend the Member for Derby, and in particular with the authority of Lord Eldon?

The hon. and learned gentleman who has just sat down dwelt on the case of Clontarf,¹ as if it had anything to do—he will forgive me for saying so—with the discussion in which we are now engaged. The case of Clontarf was a case in which, if I remember right, it was intended to gather together 150,000 or 200,000 people; and I rather think I am correct in saying that on that occasion, or about that period—because there had been more meetings—Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, was asked as to whether numbers made a meeting illegal. I do not know whether that question had reference to the opinion which the hon. and learned gentleman has quoted from Lord Brougham²—an opinion which, I confess, does not appear to be unreasonable. At any rate, it seems to me that a meeting which is upon a scale so vast that the discussion cannot possibly be exhaustive, stands in a totally different category from the meeting we are now considering, the meeting at Ennis, with

¹ A "monster" Repeal meeting summoned at Clontarf was prohibited by the Government in 1843.

² That it was an essential condition for the exercise of the right of public meeting and for its existence that the meeting should be for discussion alone.

respect to which these considerations have the smallest possible application.

Now, with regard to the particular facts of the meeting at Ennis, and whether the right hon. gentleman had any reason to apprehend that it would be of a dangerous character, I can only say that it would be absurd for me to attempt to pronounce an authoritative opinion without a far more minute and accurate knowledge of the facts than I at present possess. But this I must say, that, in my opinion, the right hon. gentleman did not in the slightest degree lay before us evidence calculated to command our assent upon that subject. I leave that point rather to be discussed by others; but I wish to draw attention to the point which my right hon. friend had mainly in his mind—the fact of the prohibition of the meeting, combined with the doctrine by which that prohibition has been justified. My right hon. friend read out in the hearing of the Attorney-General for Ireland¹ the doctrine of that right hon. and learned gentleman, and what said he? He said that, under the Common Law, it would be justifiable—I am not quoting, but only giving the substance—to prevent a public meeting which the Government, upon the evidence before it, might regard as calculated to produce public disorder, or to be called together for an improper purpose. Well, sir, all public meetings held on the Liberal side are meetings called together for an improper purpose. Will the right hon. and learned gentleman adhere to such language as that? Will he lay that down as a legal opinion? Does not common sense teach the meanest and most ignorant among us that, if a Government is authorised to prevent a meeting which it regards as called for an improper purpose, the meaning is, that the entire liberties of the people as regards public meetings are placed in the hands of that Government? Does the right hon. gentleman think that in this House of Commons he could propose a clause which would run to the effect—‘Be it enacted that if Her Majesty’s Government shall have reason

¹ Mr Gibson, Q.C., Member for the Walton Division of Liverpool, afterwards an Irish judge.

to consider that a meeting is called for an improper purpose, they there and then shall proceed to prohibit it?' The right hon. gentleman, the Chief Secretary of Ireland, carefully eschewed the discussion of those legal doctrines. Now, what we want is to drag those legal doctrines into view. However important is the prohibition of a particular meeting, much more is the general rule upon which these proceedings are hereafter to be governed. I say, that if you are to prohibit a meeting on account of its tendency to disorder, that must be proximate disorder. You have no right to say—'We think these are dangerous things, and will ultimately issue in social disorganisation.' That is not ground for prohibiting a meeting. Lord Eldon admitted no such ground; he only admitted that which was likely to lead to disorder and riot in connection with the meeting itself. And then it is most important we should know from the Government whether the Attorney-General intends to advise the Government that when a meeting is called for an improper purpose, he is to be at liberty to prohibit it. The right hon. gentleman, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, said that there had been a great number of meetings—I think over three hundred—held since he had been in office; which were permitted to be held, and only a very small number subjected to prohibition. I even will venture to hope that recent occurrences may have taught a lesson to the Government, and I shall watch their conduct with a very great interest from a sincere and earnest desire to find that the right hon. gentleman will be able to give something like reality in the future, more than in the past, to the principles he has laid down with regard to the value of the title of the people to assemble together for the purpose of discussing the action of the Legislature and the Government, and for every purpose which is consistent with the laws of the land, and with the peace of the country. That is exactly what appears to us not to have been the principle by which Her Majesty's Government were prompted in the case of Ennis, where they did not even attempt to show that their proceedings were in conformity with the law as laid down by the highest legal authorities.

Then the right hon. gentleman went to those proceedings at Mitchelstown, which have once more harrowed up the feelings of the country at large, and I must say that his conduct appears to me to have been marked by singular rashness and imprudence in the line he has taken upon that subject. It was perfectly competent for him to say in these grave circumstances, after the loss of two lives, if not three—if only two, the third hardly trembling in the balance, but approaching certainly the latest hour—it was open to him to say that “This must be the subject of inquiry not less grave, and I decline to enter upon any discussion, I decline to say who was right or who was wrong, and we must have these things searched and probed to the very bottom; and whatever may be my private impression, at any rate the opinion of the Executive Government must not be given until we are in possession of the fullest information.” For my own part, I wrote to my right hon. friend, the Member for Derby, when this painful intelligence was first divulged, that I felt persuaded that that would be the course which the Government would take. Instead of that, the right hon. gentleman has rushed headlong into the thick of the fray; he has made up his mind, and he has contended in this House that all that was done was right, and that if the police had not done what they did, they would have been guilty of the grossest neglect; that the people in mass who had been attending the meeting attacked the barracks, and that the strictest laws of self-defence required the police to fire upon them. These are propositions to which, with an imprudence which I cannot describe, the right hon. gentleman has at a moment’s notice been ready to pledge himself. He has identified himself with every one of these proceedings. It is idle for us to say now that the police are to blame. The right hon. gentleman has judged the matter. He has gone so far as to say that the police could not have done less than they did, and that all they did was in the last extremity wrung from them by dire necessity, and so long as he was Chief Secretary for Ireland he would take care that in like necessity they should do the

same. Had the right hon. gentleman pursued what I think the more usual course, had the right hon. gentleman maintained a discreet reserve on account of the nature of the case, and, at the same time, pledged himself to the House of Commons that every effort that he could use should be employed to get at the truth, in order to bring it out to the view of Parliament and the world, I for one—inconvenient as it might appear at this period of the Session in some points of view—undoubtedly would have accepted at once that declaration of Her Majesty's Government, and would have declined any discussion of the question. But it is impossible to take that course—the right hon. gentleman has made it impossible. He has done all that he could to bias a judicial inquiry. With all the authority of his office, he has declared what is now the firm and fixed opinion of the Executive—and he has compelled us to state how the thing appears to us on the facts as they are before us.

I reserve, sir, my ultimate judgment upon them. I do not consider that anything but presumptions are open to me at the present moment. I consider the presumptions or the assertions—the presumptions or the judgments, of the right hon. gentleman are right in the teeth of the facts as they are given on trustworthy information. I am sorry that there may be many here who did not hear the extremely lucid, and I think fair and impartial statement of the senior Member for Northampton. I listened to it with great attention. I have gathered what I could from the public journals, and from what has been said in this House, and especially I may say from the reports supplied to *The Standard* newspaper. It appeared to me to be written by a man of great intelligence, and a man of whom I am justified, I presume, in believing that at any rate he has not made his report under the influence of predilections for the cause of the Nationalists.

Then there is a mixture here again of statements of fact and of doctrine. Doctrines have been laid down with respect to the attendance of a Government reporter at public meetings and Nationalist meetings. What appears to have happened

in this case? No communication was held with the promoters of the meeting. Is it possible to conceive a grosser or more culpable negligence? The Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks fit, I will not say to ridicule, but to signify astonishment at that proposition. Everybody knows that it is the usual practice of reporters to make arrangements with the promoters of meetings. What are the rights of Government reporters? Why, the right hon. and learned gentleman the Attorney-General for Ireland has spoken of them as if they were *sacrosancti*. They have no rights at all excepting [Mr Balfour dissented]—oh, you are in too great a hurry, you do not even wait for a comma—I was going to say excepting the right which all persons have of attending a meeting to which all persons are invited. The Government reporter, therefore, has that right and no other. If he has any other right, what law or custom has given it to him? If you have that right, why did you not use it in a prudent manner; why did you not communicate with the promoters of the meeting? Why did you not have your chief officer on the spot, instead of his being where nobody could find him? I do not believe that in Ireland it will be necessary for all eternity to have Government reporters at public meetings. I have attended many in the course of my life, and I do not think I ever had the honour and pleasure of seeing a Government reporter. If he does go to a meeting he should attend subject to the rules of prudence and courtesy. It was the duty of the Government and of their agents to take care to bring the reporter there in a manner most convenient to all concerned, and least likely to bring about a disturbance of the public peace. Above all, if they choose to assert this doctrine of right—which we shall scrutinise pretty severely—I hope there will be a disposition to give us some explicit information upon the subject.

You tell me that there are meetings of a dangerous character, and likely in the circumstances of Ireland to lead to disturbance. Then, I say, these are additional reasons why, in sending your reporter to these meetings, you should take care to do it in a way that is not in itself likely to be a cause of difficulty.

What is done in this case? On this occasion the police endeavoured by force to make their way through a dense crowd gathered in front of the speaker. I solemnly declare, that, in my opinion, there are but two explanations for such an extraordinary course of proceeding—one which I never saw, and I doubt whether any man who hears me ever saw. One is, that there was an intention to bring about disorder. I do not entertain that, but circumstances somewhat warrant this possibility. It is not my own belief; but I am bound to say it shows a degree of stupidity and negligence which it is hardly possibly to conceive. The hon. Member for Northampton assures us that there was another route to the waggonette where the speakers were arrayed by which they could have attended without the least difficulty. Is anybody prepared to contradict that statement? If they cannot contradict it, why was not that route taken? But even if they can contradict it why was this astonishing method pursued of rushing with a body of men against a dense crowd except for the very purpose of creating disorder?

Well, sir, these are questions which, it appears to me, have never presented themselves to the right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary for Ireland, who rides so easily over this rough ground, and finds himself able to assert that the conduct of the police was perfectly correct, and that they would have grossly failed in their duty if they had not done what they did. He contradicted me when I said that the police attempted to make their way into the crowd by force. He quoted newspapers. I quote the correspondent of *The Standard*, who says that three times over the police made their way by force. He says, in the first place, that the police appeared, not twelve in number, but twenty, on the outskirts of the crowd, and attempted to force their way through. Twice does the correspondent of *The Standard* refer to the police attempting "to force their way through." In matters such as these a very large share of responsibility must rest on those who commit the first error, and it certainly was a gross and most dangerous error to attempt to force a body of twenty

policemen through a dense crowd. . What The Standard correspondent says—and he seems to be a credible and fair reporter—is, that when the people were run at in this way, “sticks were raised threatening at the police.” The police were not struck, but sticks were raised in a threatening manner. This was at the first onset. The crowd then “pushed the constables to the rear.” That was the conduct of which the crowd was guilty. The crowd refused to part, and pushed the police back. Then came the second event. Who was responsible for this? The effort to get the shorthand writer through the crowd has apparently failed. Why did the second body of fifty police come up? Was it to bring the shorthand writer through the crowd? No. We hear no more of the shorthand writer. According to *The Standard* correspondent, this second body of men formed up at the foot of square as a reserve to the dozen men who had tried to force a passage for the Government reporter. When these latter men again advanced, “they drew their staves and charged at the people.” I say that they had no right to charge at the people to secure a passage for the shorthand writer. No one has a right, be he a Government shorthand writer or a police constable escorting a Government shorthand writer, to disturb a public meeting. The right to be present at a public meeting is subject to the obligation to observe its order and to obey its rules. Any one who breaks that order, whether he be a policeman, or police inspector, or a civilian, is a disturber of the public peace. We now come to the saddest part of all. These fifty policemen having charged the people, were repulsed and driven back. There was much hard fighting, and many of the police suffered. I am sorry for that; I have great respect for the police of Ireland, for I believe they do their best under very difficult circumstances. They certainly have most painful duties to perform in carrying into execution the policy of the present Government. I will not question their chivalry and pronounce on the present occasion, or on their present action. At any rate, they were defeated and driven back, and many hard blows were given and taken. Then comes the saddest chapter of all. The right hon. gentleman has told us that the

people who had been at the meeting attacked the barracks and were on the point of breaking into them, and that the police fired in self-defence and to save their comrades who were still outside. But what proof has he given us of that? The proof was, that one man, seriously wounded, crept into the police barracks.

MR BALFOUR,—I gave the statement on the best authority the Government could get.

MR GLADSTONE,—I deny that that contained proof on the side of what appeared to be the one strong point—and it was a very weak point—of the case of the right hon. gentleman. What proof has the right hon. gentleman given us that the people who were at the meeting pursued the police to the barracks and attempted to storm the barracks? He gave us no proof whatever. There is, however, in support of the story told by the other side, the fact that the victims of the police fire consisted of an old man who had been for twenty-one years a soldier, another old man who subsequently died, and a boy of seventeen years of age. Were these the men who with black-thorn sticks had been driving the police back? All the facts show that there was no substantial attack on the barracks, but that there were merely a few persons, among whom were some boys, scattered in front of the barracks, and that, judging by the accounts in the newspapers, some few windows may have been broken.

I do not push these statements, which are necessarily imperfect, to the precipitate and imprudent length of the Minister of the Crown, who has dived to the bottom of this subject; but I say that these are presumptions entirely adverse to the propositions of the right hon. gentleman, and I hope we shall hear, before this debate closes, that this great, and sad, and grievous matter, which has created a sentiment of horror and disgust throughout Great Britain, will not be allowed to remain in the dark, but will be searched and probed to the bottom, and the whole facts made known to Parliament and the country. The right hon. gentleman said he wished to pursue a course of conciliation and firmness in the government

of Ireland, and that he has every confidence that it will all come right in the end. I wish I could say that there is either firmness or conciliation in the course he has taken. I am afraid that all that has lately taken place in Ireland tends all too powerfully to support our contention during the present Session of Parliament—that the legislation of the Government, which they stated to be directed against crime, is not directed against crime. The right hon. gentleman referred to the amount of crime in the County Clare, and the recent serious outrage which has been committed in that county. But what better means has the right hon. gentleman of dealing with that crime under the Coercion Act than he would have had without that Act? We are confirmed in our belief that the policy of the Government is not a policy aimed at crime, but that, under the guise of pursuing crime, it pursues combination; it deprives the poor man of the arm by which he can alone maintain his position in the conflict in which he finds himself; and that it is aimed at the liberty of the Press, at the liberty of the subject, and at the liberty of public meeting. I, for my part, am convinced—and the circumstances of every day tend more and more to support that conviction—that the people of this country will not follow the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues in a course which can lead to nothing but disgrace and disaster.

IRELAND

DERBY, OCTOBER 20, 1887

On October 18th, the Annual Meeting of the National Liberal Federation took place at Nottingham, where Mr Gladstone spoke on that day and the next on the Irish Question. The following day he spoke at the Drill Hall, Derby.

MR CHAIRMAN, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,—The political mission which I was invited—and an invitation was to me an order—to undertake, has terminated at Nottingham, and what I fear is that the small stock of voice which I am able to put into operation for purposes of this kind after it has served me well during a period of fifty-five years—I fear lest it should be found that that small stock of voice is exhausted as well as the political mission—but I reckon much on your patience and indulgence, and I will therefore proceed to say that it is true that my visit to Derby is an aftergrowth. It was no part of that political mission, it was due to the request of my right hon. friend¹ your distinguished representative. I felt that that request was one impossible for me to refuse, not simply upon general grounds, but because I felt that my coming here would be the most suitable acknowledgment that I could render for the distinguished services which, especially during the last Session of Parliament, he has rendered to the great national and Imperial cause. I will not attempt to describe these services; you are already well acquainted with their nature. I will only say that there was a defect in the speeches of Sir William Harcourt. It was that occasionally his assaults upon the enemy made a near approach to the character of something like a massacre, and its discomfiture and confusion was likewise something of the nature of havoc. However,

¹ Sir William Harcourt.

gentlemen, I have thought that on that account it was my duty to come here, as it was also my pleasure, subject only to the fear that I could not do justice to the enthusiasm with which you have been pleased to greet our visit, and the manner in which you have been pleased to meet us on this occasion. Now, gentlemen, I shall not attempt to inflict upon you a harangue of the unheard-of extension which I inflicted on Nottingham. I have pretty well completed my review of the points which appear to be applicable to the present situation, but the field of debate and controversy is at present a very wide one. It is narrowing in one vital and essential sense—namely, that the forces by which we are opposed are narrowing; while our forces, I rejoice to think, are multiplying and extending. But yet I may find cause on this occasion to refer to one or two of the more plausible of the objections that are taken by opponents of the policy we propound, points which I have not noticed, or hardly noticed, in speeches at Nottingham.

Now, gentlemen, the first of these is a charge which I think to be one of the most plausible, perhaps, that has been advanced in the present controversy against us, and it affects myself in particular. I shall not deal with it at great length, and when I say it is one of the most plausible of the points taken by our adversaries, I think I shall enable you to judge of what flimsy materials—if that is the best they can produce—of what flimsy materials the general structure of their argument is composed. It is commonly said, gentlemen, that I am now engaged in co-operating with those whom, on a former occasion, I denounced as propounders of plans that signified rapine and meant the dismemberment of the Empire. It is quite true, gentlemen, that in the year 1881¹ I did describe in that strong language the policy which the Nationalist leaders of Ireland seemed to me at that moment to be pursuing. It is not the question, however, whether I was right or wrong in that belief, but my belief, and that of the Government with which I was connected, was that the intention of that party in Ireland was not simply to seek for equitable adjustment between the

¹ At Knowsley, October 27th.

tenants and the landlords of Ireland, but to destroy the essence of landed property in that country—to establish, in fact, what was proclaimed in principle by the “No-Rent” manifesto¹—and thereby, as we thought, to break up social order and the essential conditions upon which the Empire is united. Having that belief, I described it in terms which I would now use again if I saw, or thought I saw, the same cause to use it.

I find no such purpose entertained by the Nationalists of Ireland. As they have obtained greater power their moderation has become conspicuous. As they now command—instead of having been, as they then were, a limited minority of the Irish representatives—as they now command an overwhelming majority, so all ground of suspicion for a desire to destroy the landed property of Ireland, to break up the obligations which bind the occupier to the owner, which bind the debtor to the creditor, has disappeared, and there has disappeared all ground for stating that these gentlemen, as a body—I believe I might say that any one among them either contemplates or desires to dismember the Empire, or to weaken in any particular those bonds by which it is united. On the contrary, gentlemen, I believe in the moderation of the policy now recommended; not, remember, the destruction of the Act of Union, which was obtained from Ireland eighty-seven years ago by means which should make every Englishman blush—not the destruction of the Act of Union, but the establishment of a system of Irish local government for purely Irish concerns, subject to and subordinate to the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament. Therefore, gentlemen, the charge against me comes to this—that I have endeavoured, as it was my duty to endeavour, to shape my language to the conduct, as well as I could judge of it, of the persons to whom it was applied. On the contrary, the allegation generally seems to be, whether men behave wisely or unwisely, whether their proposals are violent or moderate, whether you think they are doing what tends to destroy the Empire or what tends to consolidate it, and to substitute a rule of union of hearts for a sham union of paper

¹ Issued October 18, 1881.

and of parchment, that the same language ought on all matters to be applied to them. If I accused those gentlemen at one time of rapine, let me consider what sort of language I have put forth and applied to the doings of Tory opponents.

I remember a time, during what we called the Jingo period,¹ which has happily passed away and is only a matter of painful and grateful memory—of painful memory that it should ever have existed, of grateful memory that it has melted under the reprobation, the mountain of reprobation, of public disapproval—during that period I remember very well in a public speech feeling myself led to describe doctrines of Lord Salisbury in relation to his policy in the Balkan Peninsula as doctrines of “piracy”; and I rather consider that it would not be very easy to draw a broad distinction between piracy and rapine, but rather that, if a distinction is to be made at all, piracy is the superlative of rapine, and of all kinds and varieties of rapine the most virulent and the most intense. But Lord Salisbury has been directing the English policy again in the Balkan Peninsula during the past few years with one interruption. I do not know what he has done exactly, but so far as I know I see no cause to condemn or disapprove it. Therefore I have spoken well of his proceedings in the Balkan Peninsula during that period. Yet no Tory has found fault with me at all, and has not said to me in that case—“You are commending men that you accused of piracy and are not condemning them in the same terms.” Now that the Tory chief is going on the lines of moderation, I do not think I should sit down under the charge of gross and flagrant inconsistency. This, I have said, is one of the best points of our adversaries—one of the most plausible and specious charges that have been brought forward during this Session; and if such be the best of what their ingenuity can produce, I again ask you to judge what the common staple of their arguments must be by which they think to stay that tide of opinion and of public determination

¹ About 1876-79. The name, which was taken from a popular song of the time, referred to the alleged warlike tendencies of Lord Beaconsfield's Administration.

which is setting in the direction, and will presently attain the result, of establishing Home Rule in Ireland. Now, gentlemen, that is a point which, as I have said, grew out of my own conduct and out of my own language.

I now come to a point of greater breadth—the charge, not against myself only, but against the distinguished men with whom I am connected, in whom I have full confidence, and whose confidence I hope and think I in some measure possess. It is said of me, it is said of Sir William Harcourt, it is said of many more, that again we are guilty of a gross inconsistency because in other times we have supported measures of Coercion for Ireland, while during the last Session we have offered to the measure of Coercion the best and most persistent opposition in our power. I do not admit the inconsistency, and I will tell you why. I will place it upon two grounds. One of them narrower, but quite sufficient—the broader I will deal with presently. The narrow ground is this—that although we have supported measures of Coercion in other times, we have never supported such a measure of Coercion as this. All the measures of Coercion for which we have been in any degree responsible, all the measures of Coercion that have previously passed the British Parliament—they may have been wise or unwise, I reserve that point for the present, but they have been invariably distinguished by this one essential determining characteristic, they have been concerned in the intention, the *bonâ fide* intention, of dealing with crime. Crime has been their object; the suppression of crime has been their aim. We deny that that has been the aim of the present Bill.¹ We deny that that has been the reason. My right hon. friend your member was the first to point out in the debates in the House of Commons, at the moment when the Bill was placed in our hands, that the evident intention of the Bill was not to put down guilty conspiracy, not for the purpose of preventing outrage and strengthening the law, but to put down those legal, natural, and in some circumstances necessary combinations which are necessary to enable the individuals who make up

¹ The Crimes Bill. See earlier speeches in this volume.

the community to contend with more powerful classes. As the debates developed it was demonstrated, and the declarations of the Government furnished the testimony to show that the Bill in the main was not against crime and criminal combination, but against lawful combinations. The Bill was intended to deprive the Irish people of the only instrument which, in their unfortunate circumstances, could defend their rights. There was not only limitation of trial by jury, not only trial in a private chamber by the Lord-Lieutenant of matters which ought to have been decided in open Court, but there was a determined purpose to strike at these two great walls of our freedom—the liberty of the press and the liberty of public meetings.

It is a mistake, it is a gross and mischievous error, to place the Act of the present year in the same category with previous measures of Coercion, because, as I have said, their object is different; and, now, when that Act has been for a month or two in operation, are not these allegations completely verified? The Act, as we see, has been set vigorously to work, but to work for what purpose? For picking holes in an article by Mr O'Brien¹ or some other more obscure editor of some local newspaper in Ireland, and by prohibiting meetings, such as, if there is to be freedom in the country, ought not to be subject to the interference that exists. Do not let me be misunderstood. I mean meetings which have been so prohibited such as ought not to be subject to that interference, because, unquestionably, there may be meetings which it may be the duty either of the Government in Ireland or, perhaps, more properly, of the regularly appointed guardians of the peace—namely, the Justices of the Peace—to stop or to disperse. There may be unlawful assemblies—but the aim has been to strike at lawful assemblies.

Well, gentlemen, there is one feature in this Act with respect to which, had it been the only objectionable feature, I for one would have said that it deserved, and that it required to meet with, the most unequivocal condemnation and the

¹ Member for the North-East Division of County Cork.

stoutest resistance from every good citizen. I mean that odious provision by which a Bill that could never have had an apology, excepting with reference to the transitory necessity, has been made a portion of the permanent law of the country. What would you think of your physician if he sent you a prescription which you had to take every day of your lives? That is a feeble and inadequate description, in my opinion, of the most enormous breach of principles applicable to legislation that has ever happened in my time. It is, I believe, an unquestionable fact that in those times which you now look back upon with horror as the times of Lord Sidmouth and the passing of the Six Acts,¹ it was a serious object of desire with some of the Ministers of the day to make those Acts perpetual. It was said that it was always in the power of Parliament to do a great many things, as to undo them; but it was not always in the power of Parliament to do this without long delays, painful controversies, and innumerable obstacles. We say it is monstrous to engraft on the body of our statute law provisions adverse to trial by jury, adverse to judicial investigation, going to establish executive tyranny, and associated with a set of invidious provisions, the object of which is not to strengthen the hands of the Government against crime, thereby consolidating the order of society, but to deprive the Irish people of those means of combination which are so freely and unscrupulously used in Ireland, and even in England, by persons of the upper classes, with or without cause, to promote their own purposes, but with respect to which, although I neither love them nor admire them in themselves—all exclusive dealing is a matter to be looked upon with aversion, to be regarded with jealousy, with pain, with fear—but with respect to which if it remains within the discretion of men to adopt them, as it has remained within their discretion in England, it is monstrous to deprive the Irish people of that power, for no nation in the history of Christendom ever had reason so grave or imperative either to excuse or warrant the resort to the use of them.

¹ In 1819, when Lord Sidmouth was Home Secretary.

I might give you many other reasons why men were justified in opposing this Act, having supported Coercion Acts in the past. Do not let it be supposed that to have supported an Act of Coercion as a necessity proves unfaithfulness to the cause of freedom in Ireland. It may not be within your recollection, but it may be within the knowledge of some or many, that when a short time after the Union the first proposal¹ was made to the Imperial Parliament to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, the most severe form of Coercion in Ireland, the proposal was supported by no less a man than the man whose name will ever be illustrious in Irish and in British history. It was supported by Mr Grattan. Rely upon it, gentlemen, Mr Grattan would never have supported such measures excepting under the conditions in which they were presented to him. He found that the Irish had been deprived, notwithstanding his opposition and that of every Irish patriot and of every Liberal statesman in England, of their powers of home government by a Parliament in Dublin. He saw plainly that that work, whether good or bad, could not be undone in a moment. Mr Fox, who had been the most illustrious of all the opponents of the Union—because, as he said, “It proceeds upon the principle that you know what the Irish want better than the Irish do themselves”—yet Mr Fox, without the smallest change of attitude as to its merits, said the change was so vast and had so dislocated the materials of government that, once adopted by the country, it must have its trial; it must be accepted provisionally, and it must carry with it among its consequences the necessity for Coercion, ending in this disgraceful consummation in the year 1887, that coercion has been widened, Coercion has been transformed into something more subtle, more piercing, more fatal to liberty than was ever known before, and that Coercion which every previous Parliament, reformed and unreformed, has had the decency at least to treat as an occasional measure, has been embodied in your statute-book as a piece of legislation not less permanent, so far as law is concerned, than the Reform Act or the Bill of Rights.

¹ The Arms and Insurrections Bills. 1807.

Well, gentlemen, we have recognised what I will describe in a few simple but conclusive words, we have recognised the total failure of Coercion as an instrument of government in Ireland, and we have opposed the late Coercion Bill not only upon the grounds, sufficient and more than sufficient as they were, which I have described to you, but we have opposed it because we think it is time to search for a more excellent way. It is time to cease to palter with the case, it is time to give over dealing with the symptoms of disease and adopting measures that do nothing but drive the disease inwards upon the vital parts. The method which has put an end to the risk of war between Hungary and Austria, the method which is causing Norway and Sweden, two nations entirely alienated and separated, to agree to be together as one united kingdom, that method is approved by practical political experience throughout the world. It is the method which we have desired to apply in the case of Ireland, and which we believe the people of England, like the people of Scotland, like the people of Wales, are becoming every day more desirous to apply to the solution of this formidable problem. So much for the question of our consistency or inconsistency, on which I would not have detained you at all had it not been that it was closely allied with the merits of the problem before us.

Yet one other point on which I will dwell with your permission for a few minutes, and which grows naturally out of what I have said. It is said by our opponents that the case of Ireland differs from every one of the cases in which the remedy of home government has been applied. It differs from the case of Hungary in the face of Austria because Hungary was so big. It differs from the case of Finland—which enjoys the privileges of home government—of Finland in the face of Russia, because Finland is so little. It differs from the case in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man because they are so little and so near, though they are not much nearer than Ireland, and it differs from the case of Australia and Canada because they are such a long way off.

There is another difference, gentlemen, on which our opponents

are fond of dwelling. They state that Ireland is not one nation but two. It was exactly upon the same grounds, on much the same grounds, I well remember, the opponents of the Italian cause always contended that the north of Italy and the south of Italy were inhabited by two peoples incapable of uniting. You see what the result has been, and you know now, and no one can deny it, that neither the north nor the south could muster a minority of perhaps one in a hundred against the great consolidation which has taken place. But they say that in Ireland it is quite true that the Roman Catholic population has always been more or less disloyal and disposed to separate from England, whereas the Protestant population of the north has been a permanent standing garrison on behalf of England, determined to obtain and to maintain the incorporated union with this country, and totally hostile to the idea of an Irish Parliament. Well, now, with regard to the Roman Catholic population of Ireland I will give you two testimonies. About 120 years ago¹ the Irish Parliament passed an Act for the purpose of abolishing a large portion—though not the whole portion—of those disgraceful penal laws which were the main and trusted instruments of governing Ireland in the eighteenth century. In the preamble to that Act the Irish Parliament recites that one of the main motives of passing it has been the steady and unfailing loyalty for a series of generations of the Roman Catholic population of the country. Twenty years later Mr. Burke, near the close of his illustrious life, speaking of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, said, “The Roman Catholic population of Ireland is inflexibly loyal, unless it be at a few points in the country where they have been in some degree tainted by contact with the Protestants.” Undoubtedly dangerous opinions did prevail in this permanent garrison of England among the Protestants of the north, but they prevailed only for a time. Yet there is one broad fact of the history of the last century in Ireland, and that is that among the champions of the principle of an Irish Parliament, not the Roman Catholics, but the Protestants of Ireland ever stood in

¹ 1779.

the first rank. I will give a quotation as to that fact. You have heard of Belfast. I almost wish that for one year¹ of its history or for some months you had not heard of it. It is a community of great energy, great wealth, of great enterprise, of great intelligence, and I have no doubt an overwhelming majority of its inhabitants condemn as much as we do the atrocities and outrages of the summer of 1886. But the people of Belfast were before the Union of Ireland the stoutest champions of the idea of Irish self-government not as against England, not as against the British Crown, but simply as the best means of securing the happiness of the people, of obtaining an intelligent attention to their wants by those who understood them, instead of by only the few representatives of Ireland, almost lost in the mass of members in the British Parliament necessarily set in the main on promoting the larger and more extended interests of importance, of vast importance, to the masses of the population on this side of the Channel. But here is a document, an address resulting from a meeting in Belfast held on or about the 10th of March 1780,² and reported in the local newspaper of the day, the *News Letter* of that date, which reads—"We, the sovereign, burgesses, and inhabitants of the town of Belfast"—I dare say you know that the sovereign is the Irish name for the mayor. It seems that the people of Ireland are not such violent democrats after all, or they would not have called their mayor their sovereign. The town of Belfast in its corporate capacity thus met in order to thank the British Parliament for having relieved Ireland from commercial slavery, but they went on to say that was not enough, and they addressed their members on the subject, addressed them in the Parliament in Dublin—"We therefore call upon you at this critical time to instruct you strenuously"—to do what? To seek to deprive Ireland of her powers of self-government? Was that the language of the Protestants at that time? It was exactly the reverse. They asked them

¹ From June to September 1886 there were riots arising from conflicts between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

² In this year the British Parliament granted Free Trade to Ireland.

to relax the restrictions of what was termed *Poynings's law*.¹ They went on in these words to say :—

“That you will endeavour to procure such a declaratory Act as will ascertain and confirm to us and to our posterity our national birthright, we mean the privilege of being bound only by laws enacted by the Parliament of Ireland, and thereby cement the reciprocal confidence which should ever subsist between Ireland and the sister kingdom.”

Such were the historical professions of the Protestants of Ireland, and not issuing merely from the people of Belfast, for similar meetings were held and similar declarations were made in a multitude of other portions of the country, not among the Roman Catholic population, who had been too long trodden down to have wakened to more than the first consciousness of political existence, but in the county of Down, in the county of Antrim, and in those portions of Ireland which have all along been known as the strongholds of Protestantism. And, gentlemen, depend upon it, when you see now the utter falsity of the supposition that there is a radical and ingrained hostility among Irish Protestants to Irish local government, depend upon it that there is a misunderstanding, and a complete misunderstanding on the part of our opponents of what it is that the Protestants of Ulster want. What the Protestants of Ulster want, because, after all, they are intelligent and reasonable men, what they want is full assurance that the connection of Ireland to this country is to be maintained. I will not now speak of the particular means by which that assurance is to be conveyed. Undoubtedly, I think they desire that the connection between the Irish representation and the United Kingdom should be recognised and should not disappear. It is time to go to the root of the matter to see whether we cannot remove these evils that have so long afflicted Ireland and afflicted and perplexed Great Britain by removing, by destroying their cause.

Well, gentlemen, there would have been a charge against us perhaps, after we had said that we would oppose Coercion that we had proposed nothing in its place, but we have

¹ Passed 1494.

proposed a broad and adequate and a very different method of proceeding. That simple method was the investing Ireland as a member of this great empire, and subject to the obligations of membership, with an adequate practical power of managing her own concerns—a method which is so splendidly successful in every colony of Great Britain; that method which has enabled our kinsmen in the vast combination of the United States to join together the local freedom of each separate State with the firm knitting into one compact mass of the entire political body; that method which all over the Continent of Europe where difficulty has been found was perfectly capable of removing all that was formidable in that difficulty. When after a short time that method will embrace Ireland also within its scope, there will be no exception to the rule that Her Majesty the Queen receives from all her subjects not a strained but a willing obedience, and that portion of her subjects, although invested with privileges which they do not now possess, will be nearer her than they now are because they will have the same feeling as to the glory and interests of this vast Empire, which extends to every quarter of the globe. These are the objects for which we are trying. These are the objects which can be obtained, not by your leaders, but by your decision and your influence—the influence of the voters, the influence of the constituencies, every one of whom must now take his share of the responsibility as he has obtained his share of power. We ask your assistance in achieving this blessed consummation, trusting that as individuals, in whatever position we may be placed, we shall not be wanting in what we feel to be the most important of our duties, and at the same time the highest of our delights.

THE STATE OF IRELAND

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FEBRUARY 17, 1888

On the usual motion for an address in answer to the Queen's Speech Mr Parnell proposed as an amendment "to leave out paragraphs ten and eleven in order to insert the words—Humbly to represent to Her Majesty that the portion* of the Irish legislation of last session, which was of an ameliorative character, has tended to diminish agrarian crime, whereas the repressive legislation† of the session has done much to alienate the sympathy and respect of Her Majesty's Irish subjects for the law; and that the administration of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, as well as much of the action of the Executive in Ireland, has been harsh, partial, and mischievous." Mr Gladstone spoke on the amendment, which was rejected by 317 to 229.

SIR,—Following the right hon. gentleman¹ in the debate, I shall only notice those portions of his speech which appear to me to go to the heart of the question; and those portions of his speech which do really go to the heart of the question, constitute, in my opinion, a very small proportion of the speech. Criminatory and recriminatory matter, however amusing it may be to a portion of the House—and such matter is always amusing—really assists us very little in getting to the centre and the root of the great question that is before us. I do think that in this particular case there is a great difficulty, owing to the enormous range, to the multitude and diversity of weight of the points involved, in confining this debate within—I will not say reasonably narrow limits—but within the narrow limits to which we all desire to confine it. My hon. and learned friend the Member for Inverness² last night, at a time when no member of the Government appeared to be in a condition to follow the speech of the hon. Member for North-East Cork,³ gallantly stepped into the breach, and

* Notably the Irish Land Bill.

† Notably the Criminal Law Amendment (Ireland) Act.

¹ Mr A. J. Balfour, Member for East Manchester, and Chief Secretary for Ireland.

² Mr Finlay.

³ Mr W. O'Brien.

performed that office on behalf of the Government which has been so often performed by those who, sometimes called Dissident Liberals, have found means of defence for her Majesty's Government, which they and their adherents behind them have not been able to discover. My hon. and learned friend, complaining of the length of the debate, said it was high time it should draw to a conclusion. Now I can perfectly understand the reasons why my hon. friends should even desire that there might be no debate at all upon this question. But when he said that it had extended to an unreasonable length I point to the speech of the Attorney-General¹ last night—of the length of which I am as far as possible from complaining—but which was evidently in sharp contradiction with the view of my hon. and learned friend the Member for Inverness. Why, Sir, it has not been possible to include in this debate a number of questions which deserve, and may yet have to receive detailed criticism. For example, the law of public meeting has hardly been touched in this debate; and yet it is gravely involved in the proceedings of the Recess.² The relations between landlord and tenant have hardly been touched, and to that notwithstanding a similar observation will apply. The treatment given to prisoners of a particular class has not been made a subject of discussion.³ I will make none of these matters a subject of discussion; but, at the same time I think none can doubt that all of them, and many more besides, are fit for the attention and consideration of the House. I must proceed therefore, Sir, by the method of selection; and I am bound to say, that, so far as I am personally concerned, if it had not been for the pointed reference made to me, and for the perfectly fair and just challenges delivered against certain portions of my conduct or speeches in the Recess,⁴ I should gladly have remained outside the contest. I am of opinion that such speeches as have been made by the hon. Member for the

¹ Sir Richard Webster.

² Proclamations had been issued for the suppression of the National League in different parts of Ireland.

³ Several Irish Members of Parliament had been sentenced to imprisonment for inciting tenants to resist eviction and for offences under the "Crimes" Act.

⁴ Notably in Mr Balfour's Speech.

(City of Cork¹ in moving the Amendment, and by the hon. gentleman the Member for North-East Cork² on the memorable occasion of the opening of last night's debate, are more important, and go more to the heart of the matter and more to the heart of the country, than anything that can be said or urged by those who, whatever else may be said of them, cannot deny that they stand in a position of leaders of a party, and are liable to an imputation of party interests, which is taken by gentlemen like the Irish Secretary to be their sole actuating motives; whereas, on the other hand, these gentlemen are in a position to say that they have shown their independence of Party. They have dealt a death-blow to Liberal Administrations, and the Members of those Liberal Administrations never have complained, and would not have been justified in complaining. They are the advocates and organs of a nation. As the organs of a nation they are in a position to speak with an effect to which we cannot make any just pretension, when they address themselves to the heart and understanding of another nation to whose judgment they are appealing. But, Sir, there was a part of the speech of the right hon. gentleman which he introduced with an apology, into which I think it right briefly to follow him. He referred to the communications which had passed between Lord Salisbury and the hon. Member for the City of Cork.

MR BALFOUR—Lord Carnarvon.³

MR GLADSTONE—Quite so: Lord Carnarvon and the hon. Member for the City of Cork: and I am not going to question for a moment the denials he conveyed. But what are those denials? I attended as well as I could to his statement, and the denials appear to be three. In the first place, he denied that any engagement or agreement had been made. Sir, I am not aware of its having been asserted that any engagement or agreement had been made. He denied, secondly, that it ever had been stated to be the intention of the Conservative Government to grant a measure of Home Rule. I am not aware Sir, that it ever was stated that a Conservative Government

¹ Mr Parnell.

² Mr W. O'Brien.

³ See page 102.

was about to grant a measure of Home Rule. Thirdly, he denied, on the part of Lord Carnarvon—and I accept the denial with all my heart—that Lord Carnarvon had ever used any words inconsistent with the maintenance of the Union. But, Sir, I maintain that these three denials leave entirely untouched the material parts of the case. What are these material parts? If the right hon. gentleman wishes to dispose of them I can only say that they are not disposed of by what he has said to-night, and that he must set about a new series of statements and a new set of denials in order to get rid of them. It was stated by the hon. member for the City of Cork that he found himself in substantial—I may say in entire—agreement with Lord Carnarvon on the subject of Home Rule. That has not been denied. It was stated that Lord Carnarvon spoke for himself; that I do not question, in so far as a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland can speak for himself. He was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and being Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on the part of a Conservative Government which now holds that to preach Home Rule in any shape is to preach the separation of Ireland from the Empire, he was in association and agreement with the hon. member for the City of Cork on the policy of Home Rule. Is that all, Sir? When the right hon. gentleman has just had an opportunity of making his statement—and what I say is in perfect conformity with that statement—he did not deny in the speech he has just made—and certainly he had space enough in it for denial—that Lord Carnarvon and the hon. member for the City of Cork were in substantial agreement on the policy of Home Rule.

MR BAILEY—If the right hon. gentleman challenges me, I must say that the extract I read from what Lord Carnarvon said in the House of Lords clearly implied that Lord Carnarvon did not express his opinion about a Home Rule policy to the hon. member for the City of Cork.

MR GLADSTONE—What I say is this—the hon. member for the City of Cork declared that he had an interview with Lord Carnarvon, and that he found himself in agreement

with Lord Carnarvon on the subject. *The right hon. gentleman has not denied that.*

MR BALFOUR—I infer from Lord Carnarvon's statement a distinct denial. Of course, we cannot communicate with him.

MR GLADSTONE—I ask for the words of Lord Carnarvon's statement which contained the denial.

MR BALFOUR—I am very sorry; but they have been taken out of the House. I could not foresee this occurrence.

MR GLADSTONE—It is a very dangerous practice to make statements of that kind and importance without the material on which they are founded. I affirm, and I am in the recollection of the House, that whatever inference or interpretation the right hon. gentleman may place on the declaration of Lord Carnarvon, there was not a word in the passage he read which contained, or which approached to containing, a denial of the statement of the hon. member for the City of Cork, that he and Lord Carnarvon were in substantial agreement on the policy of Home Rule. In addition to that, I ask the right hon. gentleman, what he thinks of another statement of Lord Carnarvon's, made in the House of Lords, and within the memory of all of us, in which, speaking of the measures of extended government that ought to be granted to Ireland, he said that they ought to meet all the just demands of that country for local self-government, and that those measures ought to be adapted in some degree to give reasonable satisfaction to National aspirations. Does the right hon. gentleman say that he is in favour of giving reasonable satisfaction to National aspirations? On the contrary, that is the very phrase and idea that on no consideration will they recognize or admit; and it is the phrase and idea which formed the basis of the views of Lord Carnarvon, and here the right hon. gentleman cannot contradict me. Having got so far—and I intend to go further—the Lord Lieutenant, being Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and being a member of the Cabinet—or whether he had been a member of the Cabinet or not—was absolutely bound to make known his views to Lord Salisbury, if not to the Cabinet at large. He did make known his views to Lord Salisbury in the fulfilment of a

primary duty, and Lord Salisbury continued to repose his confidence in the Lord Lieutenant; for months afterwards Lord Carnarvon continued to be Lord Lieutenant; and when he retired, principally on account of ill-health, he did so amid the express regrets of his colleagues. Now, Sir, we are called Separatists. We are denounced as such—[Cheers]—I am grateful for having my assertion supported by hon. gentlemen opposite in that semi-articulate manner that they find so congenial—we are called Separatists because we wish to give effect to national aspirations in Ireland, within the limits of the Constitution, and with supreme regard to the unity of the Empire. Lord Salisbury, as head of a Conservative Government, was content to stand before the country, having in Ireland a Lord Lieutenant who was prepared to give satisfaction, reasonable satisfaction—as we are—to national aspirations, and was content to go to the Guildhall at the same time and to say that everything in the way of local self-government ought to be conceded to Ireland which was consistent with the unity of the Empire. It appears, then, that a Tory Lord Lieutenant may dally as he pleases with the Sirens of Home Rule, and that when a General Election is pending, a Tory Prime Minister may regard the entertainment of a Home Rule policy as no objection whatever to placing unbounded confidence in a Tory Lord Lieutenant. But when the Election is over! when the Lord Lieutenant is gone, and when Liberals declare that they desire to meet the national aspirations of Ireland with a reasonable and safe satisfaction—then, forsooth! they are to be denounced as Separatists.

Well, Sir, the right hon. gentleman said other things to which I must refer; but I have first to say a word upon the entertaining speech of the hon. and gallant member for North Antrim,¹ who was pleased to exhibit, to the great amusement of the House, even of those who were his victims, our delinquencies and inconsistencies, to an admiring House. After all these assaults upon us, the hon. and gallant gentleman gravely concluded with an enunciation in favour of law and order, and a declaration that his countrymen

¹ Col. Sanderson.

were not very much disposed to adopt those doctrines. I do not agree with him about his countrymen; but I confess that if I were engaged in an endeavour to show that Irishmen were not sufficiently given to recognizing the principles of law and order, undoubtedly the prominent instance to which I should refer would be the hon. and gallant member himself. The hon. and gallant gentleman comes here, forsooth! to instruct and educate us on the subject of law and order, while he reserves to himself the right of declaring, and more than once declaring that if Parliament passed a certain Act to which he objects—namely, an Act for granting to Ireland a carefully guarded—well, I will leave out the “carefully guarded”—portion of the independence she once possessed, he would be the man to resist it, and to recommend resistance to it, in others. Yet when he is dealing with gentlemen below the gangway he has the consummate art—and I must say the consummate courage—to pose as an apostle of law and order. The hon. and gallant gentleman alluded to a speech of mine in which I referred to the lamentable murder of Constable Whelehan in County Clare. The Chief Secretary for Ireland was not ashamed to say—not in this House, but where he could not be answered—that I had made adverse comments on the conduct of Constable Whelehan, a man who lost his life¹ in the service of his country. Either he had not read what I said, or if he has read it—and the same applies to the hon. and gallant member for North Armagh—they have absolutely misrepresented the purport of the speech they profess to quote. For I have never named Whelehan except to deplore his death, and to express a hope that his murderers would be punished. In my reference in that speech there is not a word to show that Whelehan was the man who was the unhappy organ of the police in ministering pecuniary payment to the infamous informer; nor is there one word in all the reference of blame to Her Majesty's Government. On the contrary, there is an express declaration that I laid no blame on Her Majesty's Government with reference to the case of Whelehan. Why, then, Sir, did I refer to it? I

¹ September 11th. 1887.

referred to it on this account. The hon. and gallant gentleman, in the careless way in which he refers to these things, said that I must have been cognizant of the fact that a price was paid for obtaining information. I said at Nottingham¹ that I made no reference at all to the rather difficult question of the payment of price for obtaining information. What I did refer to was the payment of price, not for obtaining information, but for concocting and concerting crime. After the gradual revelations that are made to us of the mode in which Ireland is administered according to the traditions of that country—it is perfectly possible that such things may have been done before, though I never heard of them—but when I did learn, in a particular instance, of that foul and loathsome practice of paying money for such a purpose to a man who was to attend, so far as we are yet informed, a meeting of the criminals for the purpose of putting the finishing hand to the arrangement and the execution of it, then I did think it was time to protest on the part of the Liberal Party, if not of the whole country, against a practice, which, in my opinion, is in itself odious to the last degree, which would not for a moment be tolerated in England, and in reference to which I thought it wise and right to point out that it was dangerous as well as odious; for in a similar case, where the population of England had become cognizant of a similar practice, they had themselves resorted to the commission of crime for the purpose of marking the detestation with which they regarded it.

I pass from the hon. and gallant gentleman to the right hon. gentleman the Secretary for Ireland; and I think he will agree that I am bound to refer to the speech which he made in the general debate on the Address with respect to the practice of Members on this side of the House in making statements outside the House which they are not prepared to repeat in it, and especially to his adverse and rather angry comments on the pacific tone of the speech which I had just delivered.² The right hon. gentleman overflows with pugnacious matter. He is young and inexperienced in debate, bold as I confess him to be, and

¹ Oct. 18th, 1857.

² On February 9th.

able as I confess him to be ; but when he has been 56 years in the service of his country, it is possible that his stock of contentious eagerness may be a little abated.

Now, Sir, the reason—and I had many reasons—but if I must deal with any reason why I was particularly anxious to avoid the needless introduction of contentious or polemical and accusatory matter in speaking in the opening debate on the Address, I believed in the first place, that an Irish debate was impending; and in the second place, the great object I had in view was to assist in promoting the purposes of Her Majesty's Government, and I will also say to promote, as I think, the honour, the dignity, and the efficiency of the House by giving what I may in simple language call a good start to the business of the Session, and to detach it so far as I was able, from everything like controversy and party conflict. But if the right hon. gentleman laments the non-combative character of that discussion, I think he will derive probably ample satisfaction for the future. There is no fear, I believe, that Irish debates will be wanting in animation, possibly even in a little animosity, so long as he continues to hold the office of Chief Secretary. The right hon. gentleman, even on that occasion, found in my pacific speech matter deserving of his indignant rebuke. I had lamented—if I must repeat my lamentation—that the nicest and most difficult parts of law are removed under the operation of the Coercion Act of last year from judges and from juries to men whom I termed of an inferior stamp. That was the observation I ventured to make, and the right hon. gentleman was rather wrathful over it. I fully admit that he is a perfect master of *tu quoque*. He said—"Whoever they are, they are the men whom you and Lord Spencer¹ appointed." Now, Sir, in the first place, it is quite inaccurate; and, in the second place, if it were accurate, it would be totally irrelevant. It is perfectly inaccurate. The statement of the right hon. gentleman was that the whole body, as I understood him—

MR BALFOUR—I said that 60 out of 73 were appointed

¹ Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1882-85.

mostly by Lord Spencer, or else were the appointments of previous Governments revived by him.

MR GLADSTONE—Oh; revived by him! And so the right hon. gentleman thinks that what he calls reviving—that is to say, not dismissing—is the same thing. Now, if there were 60 out of 73, all I can say is this—that, in the first place, the gentlemen to whose conduct I have seen taken the greatest objection as Resident Magistrates are five—Mr Eaton, Captain Seagrave, Mr Cecil Roche, Mr Meldon, and Mr Carew. Undoubtedly these are the gentlemen whom I had specially in view when I spoke of men of inferior stamp. Not one of these men was appointed by Lord Spencer. But supposing they had been appointed by Lord Spencer, the retort of the right hon. gentleman was absolutely and even ludicrously irrelevant. What I was speaking of was this—not the discharge by Resident Magistrates of their ordinary judicial duties; but their discharge of extraordinary duties which the right hon. gentleman and the Government had insisted in putting upon them. That is a totally different matter. Suppose, for example, I have a set of men in the Army who are very good corporals and sergeants, and I affirm that they are very good corporals and sergeants, and suppose I had appointed them all, but by some freak of the right hon. gentleman, those corporals and sergeants are appointed to do the duty of generals and colonels, and then I take the objection that those duties of generals and colonels are handed over to men of inferior stamp. That was the point of the objection which the right hon. gentleman did not see; and in my opinion, it as a just, and true, and solid, and perfectly unanswerable objection.

The right hon. gentleman was especially indignant with me because at a given date in the Recess, or before the termination of the Session, I had telegraphed to some correspondent the words, "Remember Mitchelstown,"¹ and that I had in a speech at Nottingham developed my meaning in using that phrase and gave whatever force I could to the meaning of my words. The right hon. gentleman thought fit to point at me the reproach that I was not disposed to maintain here what I have

¹ See p. 283.

said elsewhere. Now, Sir, I have referred,—a task which has always been to me the most irksome I know—to my own statement at Nottingham with regard to Mitchelstown; and I have to say, here and now, that I not only adhere to it, but I strengthen it. And if I use words here about it, and as few as possible, undoubtedly they will, if anything, be not weaker but stronger than the words I formerly used. I never in my life uttered words—or sent words by letter or telegram—which I more rejoiced to have used, and am better content to have used, than the words, “Remember Mitchelstown.” It was not done inconsiderately. It was done considerably, for the sake of Ireland and the country, and for the sake of lamenting the enormous mischief, the probable suffering and bloodshed, and the consequent resistance to the law that might arise in Ireland in consequence of what had occurred at Mitchelstown, and of its adoption and appropriation by the right hon gentleman. Now, Sir, what was it? It was this. A legal meeting of 4,000 people was assembled. The police, under the plea of following the usual practice of having an official reporter at the meeting, instead of prior communication with those who held it, instead of going to the platform at a point where it was open and accessible, the police formed a wedge of 20 men and endeavoured by force to drive the wedge into the middle of the meeting. I am here to say that a public meeting is an orderly assembly, and to observe order is part of the law of the land, and the driving of that wedge into the middle of that meeting, was an illegality on the part of the police, and that the police who drove, or attempted to drive, that wedge into the crowd were themselves guilty of illegality, and ought to have been given into custody. On this deplorable occasion the agents of the law were the breakers of the law; and these breakers of the law, in the first instance acting under subordinate authority, were adopted and sanctioned by the right hon. gentleman and by the full authority of Her Majesty’s Government. That was the first act of the police. What was the second? The second was this. Their wedge was not strong enough. They were beaten back; pressed back out of the crowd—it seems to me with perfect legality and pro-

priety—whereupon they brought up a large force of police and charged the crowd, because the crowd had not concurred and co-operated in the former illegality. Well, Sir, this was a fresh illegality committed by the police—that charge upon the crowd, then the violence began. Then began the use of batons; the use of sticks and cudgels; then began the sufferings of men in the crowd, the sufferings of individual members of the police, as to which the right hon. gentleman is so eloquent, and which I regret as much as he does. But the police in this, their second illegality, were beaten back by the crowd and again defeated. The crowd did not pursue them. According to all the information before us the crowd was recalled, and again took their places in the square. The merest scattering and sprinkling, for the most part of boys, probably—we know not who, but we know to what extent—went into the street where the police barracks are to be found, and these boys or others succeeded in breaking three windows in the police barracks—[*Cries of "Panes"!*]—and those three windows were exalted and uplifted by the right hon. gentleman into a general attack on the barracks, compelling the police in self-defence to fire upon the people. In one sense the police did not fire upon the people—that is to say, there was no mass of the people there to fire upon. I stated at Nottingham, and it is the result of all the inquiry I have made, that there did not appear to have been more than 20 people in the street where the police barracks are, and it was there, under these circumstances, that the police actually fired into the windows of the opposite houses—the houses of peaceable people—where there were women and children, and they fired deliberately; and as to the two old men and the boy whom they destroyed, I do not hesitate here to denounce it as cruel, wanton, and disgraceful bloodshed; it recalls the period of Lord Sidmouth, and, so far as I know there is no such example in wantonness and causelessness since the memorable occasion in Manchester,¹ popularly known as the Massacre of Peterloo.

I have now given the right hon. gentleman my views about Mitchelstown. It was time I should say "Remember Mitchels-

¹ 1819.

town," particularly when, owing to a particular class of language, Mitchelstown might have become what is called a "prerogative instance." The Mitchelstown police were commended by the right hon. gentleman, held up to the police of Ireland as a pattern they were to follow; they were told that they had acted only in self-defence; and the extent of self-defence and the meaning of self-defence is exhibited at Mitchelstown. I believe it was reasonable to fear the meaning which the police would put on that self-defence, and that they would legally or illegally act up to it whenever they got an opportunity of coming into collision with the people. I tell the right hon. gentleman frankly that I am of opinion that he has become by clear implication a breaker of the law; breaking the law by authoritative assent and approval; and, not only so, he did that under circumstances where that authoritative approval conveyed to the mind of the police would naturally, justly, excusably, almost necessarily, have pointed out to them that that was to be the model and the rule of their conduct in every example of the kind. It was in the interests of law and order that I denounced the conduct of the police. I think it will be a long time before he can discover an instance on this bench, or from any of our friends, in which law and order and the security of the lives of the people were treated with such recklessness as was then shown by the right hon. gentleman and by his colleagues. I may be wrong. I know that all gentlemen on that side are infallible; but I have not that happy privilege. I have done my best to inform myself; and in conformity with, I believe, uncontradicted and consentient statements, I contend that the inferences I have drawn from these facts are just inferences, and that it was not only natural but necessary to adopt precautions on the part, I will say, of England, against the fatal imitations which Mitchelstown might have produced, and to take securities for law and order in Ireland—first of all, as I pointed out to the people of England, that these things ought to be watched; and, secondly, by making known to the Government and to their agents, and their organs beyond the Channel, that if such occurrences did happen, they would not pass uncensured.

Therefore, Sir, I believe I never spoke more useful—I will go further, and say I believe I never spoke more fruitful words than when I telegraphed—"Remember Michelstown."

Now, I come to the statistics of the right hon. gentleman. I will make hardly any reference to Boycotting. At least, I will refer to it only in the briefest terms. The right hon. gentleman has been stingy in his statistics; but he has given us statistics of Boycotting. I do not recollect that Boycotting was ever made a portion of Government statistics before. I cannot recollect it. I can remember police protection.

MR BALFOUR—We have laid statistics of Boycotting on the table before.

MR GLADSTONE—Yes; but I am speaking of the ancient and traditional practice which this Conservative Government is always so indisposed to follow. I repeat I am not aware that Boycotting was ever before made the subject of a Return. He said if these statistics were falsified other statistics could be falsified. That is not the point at issue. The point is this. Statistics of crime deal with facts and with matter of record. Statistics of Boycotting, as far as I can understand, deal with matters of opinion. How, I should like to know, in the multitudinous Returns can they distinguish between totally and partially Boycotting? I should like to have an account of the process. What is the test? There must be, and will be, cases of harsh and unreasonable persecution under the name of Boycotting. It is never to be forgotten, though it is very common to forget it, that when you have a state of things such as prevails in Ireland—old and sore relations of friction between class and class, the sense of still remaining suffering or grievance, and consequent instability of social order—the criminal elements that will always subsist in every community (though I thank God to say that I believe they subsist in Ireland more narrowly than almost anywhere else) will find their way into social questions; and, undoubtedly, you will have bad, and very bad, cases exhibited in matters such as these. Therefore, the exhibition of particular instances is a very unsafe and insufficient test. They ought to be quoted with great accuracy. The right hon.

gentleman has been defending to-night his chosen instruments of the present year. Yes; but he was met immediately with point blank contradictions on matters of fact; and at present I shall enter no further into that question, which evidently must be made the subject of further examination. But the right hon. gentleman gave us last year a case of Boycotting which was touching to the last degree—the case of the Galway midwife. Does the right hon. gentleman say that the instance he selected last year—the instance of the Galway midwife—is worthy of credence?

MR BALFOUR—Absolutely correct in every particular.

MR GLADSTONE—All I can say is, that here, likewise, the right hon. gentleman has been met with this point-blank, this flat contradiction; but what, Sir, are we to say to Boycotting statistics as a basis for legislation, or for a criterion of the rising felicity of the country, when the right hon. gentleman out of the thousands of cases he has had before him, can only select for us two, upon which he is at once met by having his facts challenged and his conclusions falsified? My right hon. friend the member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne¹ well remarked on a former occasion that there is a chapter of statistics which, if the right hon. gentleman had chosen to enter upon, it would have been far more to the purpose than those which he has laid before us—that is, the statistics of evicted or derelict lands. There could have been no difficulty whatever for the right hon. gentleman to call for Returns of the acreage of the farms which in different counties all over Ireland, or in selected counties, had been derelict a year, or two years, or three years ago, in the time of Lord Spencer, and down to the present date, and to show how under the recovered liberty of the Irish people of which he boasts, the acreage of these derelict farms had been greatly diminished. The right hon. gentleman has not only avoided, but shirked that question, and I say he has shirked it, because he substituted for any attempt at a rational answer to my right hon. friend a jeremiad upon the state of feeling which he thought might be produced in Ireland when he found my right hon.

¹ Mr John Morley.

friend using language which, in his opinion, was capable of being interpreted into sympathy with the operation of the Land League and with lawlessness. A more unjust charge never was made. But, just or unjust, it had nothing to do with the question. The right hon. gentleman founds himself, and the Queen has been instructed to found herself in her Speech, and the organs of the Government have based themselves, in their articles, upon the assertion that liberty, as they phrase it, is returning to the people of Ireland. If that liberty were returning, it would be exhibited in a proportionate diminution of derelict farms. [MR BALFOUR—Hear, hear!] Then, why have you not shown it? We can very seldom get even the smallest information from the Government unless we apply the moral torture, which the proceedings of this House allow, to draw it from them.

Now, there is one part of the statistics we have read with complete satisfaction—that is, the diminution of crime—limited as that diminution is. I thought that the right hon gentleman, in constructing his artificial Return, gave his statistics in a very artificial manner for a special purpose. It is the first time I have known the month of January do such good service. And when I looked into the Return I found out the cause. The Return of offences reported to the Constabulary, are reported under three major heads, if I may so call them. There are offences against the person, offences against property, and offences against the public peace. With regard to the offences against the person, and against property, I find that if I take the five months only of last year, after the passing of the Coercion Act, and compare them with the corresponding five months of the year before, there is no diminution whatever. But in the month of January there was, in offences against the person, a sudden, a most well-timed and fortunate and rapid decline, for they fell from ten to three. The right hon. gentleman drew January into his service by means of that declension of seven, and he was able to draw a diminution of 6 per cent. of offences against personal property. I am extremely glad of it, and wish there had been a great deal more. The offences which have sensibly and really diminished are those against the public peace,

and I rejoice that they have diminished. The right hon. gentleman says the cause of the diminution is the Coercion Act ; but I think I have shown that whereas the diminution of crime proper as directed against personal property is an exceedingly small diminution, the diminution of offences against the public peace is much larger. I make it out to be that they fell in these six months from 324 to 238, or a diminution of 25 per cent. These are exactly the offences that would diminish under the operation of a conciliatory Land Act.

Yet the right hon. gentleman has the boldness to say that we on this side of the House never gave any credit to the Land Act.¹ Why, Sir, the Land Act, imperfect, and grossly imperfect as it was—culpably imperfect as it was, in the matter of arrears, contained a great and important provision,² which the hon. Member for the City of Cork in vain had proposed³ in September of the year before, but which, if it had then passed, would probably have prevented the Plan of Campaign. It was denounced to the House of Commons by the Government of that day as being a provision totally incompatible with that morality, forsooth, on which right hon. gentlemen opposite prided themselves. I speak of that provision which, under a great responsibility, Her Majesty's Government, though far too late, introduced as a most valuable gift. It was quite evident that, so far as offences against the public peace were concerned, the re-opening of the judicial rents and the concessions made to leaseholders could not but operate in the most powerful manner in favour of that diminution. I have here a declaration of a County Court Judge, Mr Ferguson, who last month used these words :—

“I am glad to say that on the present occasion I am sufficiently informed on the subject, and have good reason to believe that respect for the law and the disposition to obey the law, without which no social freedom, safety, or happiness can exist, is steadily increasing in this extensive riding. I believe circumstances are now in operation calculated to extend them and render them permanent. I refer to the settlement of the Land Laws of the country now so generally taking place, and for which valuers and others are extensively employed.”

¹ The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1887.

² For a re-adjustment of judicial rents previously fixed.

³ In the Tenants' Relief Bill.

I hope, now that the right hon. gentleman is in a good humour for granting statistics, that he is preparing statistics of the working of the Act, showing us who have been evicted, that we may have the means of exercising our judgment on the circumstances under which this diminution of crime has taken place. There are two other questions which go to the heart of the whole matter—namely, how the law has been administered, and how the administration of the law has succeeded. Has the administration of the law been of a character to reconcile, or has it been to estrange; has it been calculated to teach respect for the Government, or to bring the Government into hatred and contempt? Has it been of a character to render that law national, or has it been of a character to render it more anti-national?

Now, I am going into the details of the cases of prison treatment; but I shall examine the cases of two members of Parliament in reference to matters other than prison treatment. I am not answering for these facts personally; but I have received them from quarters that ought to be thoroughly well informed. Mr Sheehy, a member of this House,¹ was arrested and remanded without bail. It was a thing that might have been taken into consideration, that his wife was ill at the time with scarlatina or scarlet fever. He was offered bail by the Government, represented by the Resident Magistrate, on the condition that he should promise not to open his lips in public. By the Government,—that, I presume, means the Executive Government; and I want to know what title the Resident Magistrate has to make such a condition as that? Most dangerous is this introduction of a new discretion for Resident Magistrates—a discretion to impose novel restrictions. If Mr Sheehy had been allowed bail, and if he were to commit an offence while under that bail, he could be taken up for that offence. I want to hear from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or some other member of the Government, a distinct account of the new doctrine that these conditions may be imposed, which are written, as I believe, in no law, nor in any custom, but which have been set

¹ For South Galway. He was arrested on November 30th, 1887, under the provisions of the "Crimes" Act, for speeches delivered in Ireland.

in action in Ireland, but which in England we know are not heard of, and would not be heard of or tolerated for a moment. Mr. Sheehy, I must say very properly, entirely declined to accede to that condition, and he was tried and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. He appealed, as he was entitled to do, and bail was accepted for his appearance at Quarter Sessions, so that he would have been able to obey the almost sacred domestic form of tie which was at the time incumbent upon him. But as he was going out of the door of the court he was arrested again on another charge, and brought away immediately to a distant part of the country, his wife being in the very crisis of her illness and her life seriously threatened. On this second charge he was sentenced, not to three months, which would have enabled him to appeal, but to one month's imprisonment, depriving him of the power of appeal.

MR CHANCE—Which had been promised by the right hon. gentleman to the House.

MR GLADSTONE—The right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary is perfectly aware of that promise. He is perfectly aware that in the debate of last year he was charged by my right hon. friend near me¹ with breach of faith in regard to that promise, and to that charge of breach of faith he has remained, I must say, very patiently silent. I have nothing to add on that subject now; but I wish to point out that at the moment when this gentleman, whose wife was in danger, was naturally anxious to repair to his home, a new charge was brought against him, a sentence of a month was passed, his right of appeal was taken away, and he was prevented, not only from preparing his defence in the first case, but also from repairing to his home, where not only difficulty and pain, but actual danger threatened him. Is that the sort of administration of the Act of last year which the Government are prepared to defend? Is it thus that Ireland is to be reconciled? Is it thus that the Irish nation is to be converted? Is it in this House of Commons—the most ancient and the noblest of all the temples of freedom—that such operations as these

¹ Sir William Harcourt.

are to be either passed over in silence, or defended by those engaged in them—the responsible Executive? I cannot understand the extraordinary severity of treatment in certain particulars which, if I am rightly informed, has been meted out to this gentleman; but I wish to keep for the present to what relates most distinctly to the question of the administration of the law, as separate from the question of prison discipline, and in that point of view I will mention the case of Alderman Hooper.¹ He was proceeded against and sentenced for publishing reports of National League branches that had been suppressed; although, as I understand, there have been plenty of these reports published within the cognizance of the Government, with respect to which those who published them have not been sentenced and have not been proceeded against. Alderman Hooper was sentenced to the term of one month, which would not allow him a right of appeal; but he was, I believe, simultaneously charged with publishing another report. Another sentence of one month was pronounced against him, and these sentences, though cumulative as regards him, were not cumulative in respect of the right of appeal. Therefore, while the right hon. gentleman professes to give an appeal in the case of all sentences above a month, by this clever device it was contrived to inflict upon Mr Hooper, a member of this House, imprisonment for two months, and at the same time to deprive him of his right of appeal. And here again, Sir, I say I am sorry to utter strong words; and, as I may be tempted to do so out of this House, I will speak them in the House. I have no hesitation in describing this administration of the Act, not only as a clear evasion of the spirit of the law, but as an incredible meanness. In this method of administering this Crimes Act, that spirit is displayed which, if the Irish people had in them but a hundredth part of the courage and heart and pluck and perseverance that they have shown for seven centuries, could only tend to alienate and estrange them from those who attempt so to govern them.

The words that I have thus used I am going to use

¹ Member for South-East Cork.

again. I am, therefore, very desirous to invite the concurrence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer¹ in the propriety of my application of it, or to know whether he thinks that nobleness would be a better description—[Mr GOSCHEN—Hear Hear!]¹—of the circumstances which I am about to describe. Without knowing what I am going to say, the right hon. gentleman accepts my challenge; and, therefore, I am justified in exhibiting a specimen of the nobleness with which this administration of Ireland is conceived and executed. I have before me a list of six people prosecuted, not for publishing the reports of suppressed branches, but for selling them—two men named Macnamara in Ennis, a man named Moroney in Tralee, Brosnan and Breen in Killarney, and another. Four of the defendants were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, and two were discharged upon a promise not to offend again. Here we see once more this method of interfering with private freedom by arbitrary restriction governed by no law, justified by no usage, devised by the spirit of Irish administration, and with respect to which I want to know how far this importation into the law and jurisprudence of the country is to be carried under the auspices of Her Majesty's Government? Well now, Sir, I want to know from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he is to speak to-night, does he see nobleness in the prosecution of these men? Does he think it rational to prosecute these men? Does he think it right to require of the vendor of a newspaper that he should have read its contents; that he should have formed a judgment of its contents; that he should have made up his mind as to whether the proceedings described in the newspapers were legal or illegal? Is that a responsibility which he thinks ought to be imposed upon the vendor of a newspaper under pain of being condemned to one or two months' imprisonment? That is the administration of the Crimes Act to which I must advisedly apply, until I am better instructed, the term meanness.

The remaining point relating to the administration of the law upon which I shall comment is of a different character.

¹ Mr Goschen.

It has reference to exclusive dealing. It will be remembered that in our charges against the Bill last year we did not say that the measure justified proceedings for exclusive dealing. I do not believe we did say that it did, and I do not believe that the Act does justify proceedings of that kind. But this I am bound to say—that the Act with its interpretation appears to be deliberately applied in a variety of instances for the punishment of simple exclusive dealing. The right hon. gentleman opposite ought to know—if he does not—that when I spoke of the dismissal of curates by rectors, of the men with wives and children being deprived of their daily bread, I was not, as the right hon. gentleman charges me, comparing such cases with cases of conspiracy, but was comparing them with cases of exclusive dealing, which, while they are practised freely both in Ireland by the opponents of Nationalism and by the party of the right hon. gentleman in England—unpunishable by law—are in Ireland punished by the magistrates who, I believe have stretched and strained the deplorable Act of last Session, to make it include such cases.

I now come to eight cases of exclusive dealing, and I cite them simply to afford the Government the opportunity of verifying them. Now, Sir, I wish to mention eight cases—[here Mr Gladstone read the names]. I have now before me eight cases of exclusive dealing, two of which were dismissed, but in all the Government proceeded. In one of these cases a man was punished with a month's hard labour for refusing to shoe a horse for a Boycotted person; another was punished for refusing to sell groceries to another Boycotted person; a third for refusing to shoe a horse; and a fourth for refusing to deal with Emergency men¹; and so on. Those are all cases of exclusive dealing; there is no case of conspiracy if the reports sent me are correct; if they are wrong I hope the Government will correct them by accurate accounts, which I shall be happy to receive. In all these cases there was only a futile and colourable attempt made to set up a charge of

¹ The working men, generally from the North of Ireland, who undertook the work which the local Nationalists refused to do, were so called.

conspiracy ; it has been a matter of the purest and most arbitrary inference. In fact, these men have been punished for doing in Ireland that which would be perfectly lawful in England, and that which I believe to be perfectly lawful even in Ireland under any fair interpretation of the Coercion Act of the right hon. gentleman.

So much for the interpretation of the Act ; and now as to the design of the Act. The Government say that the Act has succeeded in a measure. Has it succeeded or has it failed ? I do not think gentlemen will object to the proposition I enunciate, that the real objects of the Act were to put down the National League and to put down the Plan of Campaign.¹ I assume that those were its objects ; and now I come again to the speech of the hon. Member for North-East Cork, which I will venture to say was a memorable speech. To him, as I have never had the privilege of private personal communication with him, I will say it publicly in this House, that although, as he says, imprisonment² under the conditions described is a hard and severe thing, which drives the iron into the soul of a man, and leaves him such that he hardly can be again what he was before, yet I trust that the hon. gentleman has derived some consolation and some encouragement to persevere, at least in lawful and patriotic efforts for setting right the wrongs of his country, from the enthusiastic reception that he encountered in this House, and out of it ; and I will add for the credit of hon. gentlemen opposite, from the respectful silence and to some extent the sympathetic silence, with which they also accorded him a kindly reception. The speech of the hon. Member was, in my opinion, of an importance that has not in the smallest degree been appreciated by the Chief Secretary. The right hon. gentleman has argued the case in his old manner ; and whereas the hon. gentleman charged him with having said that he (the hon. gentleman) pleaded ill-health against the prison dress, what appears is that the right hon. gentleman says that the hon.

¹ Initiated in 1882 and 1886 respectively. See p. 96 and p. 389.

² On the preceding October 31st, Mr O'Brien had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment for inciting tenants to resist eviction.

Member had sheltered himself by ill-health against the demand to wear prison dress. But for that statement of the right hon. gentleman, as amended and admitted, there is not a shadow of foundation. That you cannot contradict, though there are plenty of myrmidons, perhaps even some minions, that will contradict it, and show that by word or act the hon. Member for North-East Cork entered this ignominious plea. Why, Sir, has the right hon. gentleman overlooked and passed by in silence another personal statement of the hon. Member for North-East Cork, which I tell the right hon. gentleman he has no right to pass by, with respect to which I will now put it to him and to the House, that after he has had an opportunity of making Lord Salisbury's defence and has utterly failed to tender any defence at all——

MR BALFOUR—He did not require any.

MR GLADSTONE—Interruption is used as a means of reply; but that is just the point I am going to argue, and we will see how the matter stands. The statement of the hon. Member for North-East Cork was to the effect that in one of his speeches, Lord Salisbury, after some jocose references which exhibited the taste of the Prime Minister, a taste a great deal too common in speeches proceeding from that quarter, held up to British indignation the illegality of the conduct of the hon. Member for North-East Cork, and he stated that that conduct had led to disturbances and attacks upon persons, which, if I remember right, even placed life in danger, and which constituted gross outrages that were of a most serious character. In reply, the hon. Member for North-East Cork stated that his intervention at Mitchelstown produced no act of violence whatever; on the contrary, it averted violence. The right hon. gentleman has not been able to contradict that statement, and not being able to controvert it, he has passed it by. He has neither the courage to prosecute, nor the generosity to withdraw. Lord Salisbury has made an allegation which his nephew in this House cannot say a word in support of, and which was of a gross and grievous character; and his nephew now says that that allegation of Lord Salisbury, injurious as it is, remaining without a shadow of defence to prop it, needs no apology. I hold that

until and unless Lord Salisbury can show that he was justified in the broad and most important statement that he made, a personal apology from him is due to the hon. Member for North-East Cork. These are personal matters; yes, but very important matters. It is no slight matter that charges of this kind should be made by the Prime Minister of the country against a man who is put in prison; and then, forsooth! we are to have a shuffling and a shrinking from any attempt to deal with them. But with regard to putting him in prison, what was the apology by the right hon. gentleman? When the hon. Member for North-East Cork—admitting the abstract plea of the naked illegality of the act he did—pointed to the attendant circumstances and consequences of the act, the right hon. gentleman, instead of admitting the value and virtue of those pleas, generalized his charge, and said it was the habitual practice of Irish Members to do these things. Why, then, did they select for prosecution this instance, in which the hon. Member for North-East Cork is able to state, without contradiction, that his intervention, whatever judgment may be given on the naked question of its illegality, not only saved the tenants from distress, but saved the public peace from disorder and outrage? I wish to call the attention of the House to what I think the most important part of the statement I have presumed to make. When I heard the Address read from the Chair, I said that the heart of it was a challenging paragraph; and when I heard the speech of the right hon. Member for North-East Cork, I said to myself—“Never did I hear so challenging a speech.” The assertions of the hon. Member for North-East Cork opened up the whole question, and gave Her Majesty’s Government the opportunity, by contradiction, of grappling with these assertions and establishing their case, and of showing that their designs against the National League and the Plan of Campaign were at least in process of accomplishment.

Here I may say one word about the Plan of Campaign. The Plan of Campaign is an interference with the law; it is, no doubt, a substitute, without authority, for the law. Far be it from me to deny that, necessarily, such a Plan

in the abstract is an evil. It is something more; it is a sign of deeper evils; it is a sign that the law itself is not doing its work, and that the condition of legality does not exist; it is a warning to set about restoring them. This is not the only case where extra-legal combination and anti-legal combination have been brought into existence for the purpose of mitigating social disorder. You will recollect the Swing riots¹—sheer offences against the law in England. But those offences had the most important and powerful effects in bringing about wide sweeping, essential reforms of the law, which without them probably never would have been got. We know what Lynch law is in America—completely extra-legal—completely in the abstract anti-legal, a sign of imperfect organization, not of inveterate mischief, but of imperfect and insufficient growth of the social organism. And a much worse and more remarkable case, though one little known, perhaps, to most of the hon. Members in this House, but well known to those who know the history of Italy, is the Italian Camorra²—the underground government in Italy. I do not think it passed through the country, but in the Southern part of Italy it passed through the whole of society. It existed side by side with the Government; it overrode the Government and fulfilled that condition which the hon. and learned Attorney-General regards as so satisfactory, and even desirable—a completely secret society. These are all of them in their nature evils; but such is the condition of man and the imperfection of his institutions, that sometimes things which are evils in themselves are the cure or mitigation of greater evils. With respect to the Plan of Campaign, what is to be shown—I am not assuming any conclusion—about it is that without the Plan of Campaign Ireland would have been happier and more tranquil than it is at the present moment. Now, Sir, the hon. member for North East Cork—with a gallantry that did him honour, and a sincerity of conviction which quickened his whole speech, able and eloquent as it was, into an intense vitality—grappled with the whole of this question and delivered these six

¹ 1830.

² A secret organisation in the kingdom of Naples about 1820.

propositions, which, so far as the Plan of Campaign is concerned, gave to the Government the amplest opportunity of scrutiny and contradiction. First, he says that in every single instance at least its terms have been granted. He says that there are only three cases in which absolutely no settlement has been arrived at. He says that when the settlement has come it has come in some cases on the terms of the Plan of Campaign, and in some cases on still better terms for the tenant. He says, secondly, that every evicted tenant has been reinstated. He says, thirdly, that every shilling of costs has been borne by the landlords.

MR O'BRIEN—To make it quite clear, let me explain that these three propositions refer only to cases which have been actually settled up to the present time.

MR GOSCHEN—How many cases do you say have been settled?

MR GLADSTONE—I cannot tell.

MR DILLON¹—I can tell the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he wishes to know. About 40 cases have been settled.

MR GLADSTONE—The hon. member said, fourthly—and no arguments or facts were brought against this statement, that a single Campaign estate is sufficient to keep the peace of a whole county—an allegation that where the Plan of Campaign is worked the peace of the county is best preserved. The Government had it in their power to contradict that statement if the facts would enable them to do so, but they did not offer a word of contradiction. In the fifth place, the hon. gentleman said that throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, not an outrage can be traced to the Plan of Campaign. The Government have not offered the smallest contradiction. except, indeed, that very small contradiction offered by the hon. and learned Attorney-General, who said that in a particular instance, where he could not say what the cause of a certain crime was, he inferred that it was due to the Plan of Campaign. That is the sort of contradiction, and the only contradiction offered on the part of the Government. In the sixth place, the

¹ Member for East Mayo.

hon. gentleman said—and this has not been contradicted at all—that whereas we now appear to know that there are 40 cases that have been settled under the Plan of Campaign, there is no case in which the demands made under that Plan have been censured as rapacious or unreasonable by a single Land Commission. I am not arguing at this moment upon the propriety of the Plan; I am arguing upon its success—I am arguing with the Government who introduced a Bill to put it down. I have shown that in respect to these allegations directly made there is hardly the smallest shred of contradiction or qualification made against any one of them, and that these allegations—taken as they stand, and without a contradiction—show at this moment that, notwithstanding the boasts of the Administration, the Plan of Campaign stands in Ireland at the hour we speak entire, successful, and triumphant.

With regard to the National League, the right hon. gentleman, I think, succeeded in showing with great effort, by elaborate quotations from a given newspaper that there was one suppressed branch of the National League out of the whole 1,800 branches, and out of the 300 that had been suppressed, which, in respect of pecuniary matters—and I venture to suggest that it is a very considerable test of the whole—was in a sickly condition. I am not discussing the character of the League. I said last year that it was the duty of the Government to watch it closely and jealously, but to watch it legally. I am not discussing its character; I am speaking of its success. But how does that matter stand? The hon. member for Cork asserts that the branches have increased, that they are now over 1,800 in number, and that the suppressed branches are flourishing and are freely reported. The hon. and learned gentleman the Attorney-General said—“Oh, no; we are driving them into secrecy.” If you were you would be doing one of the greatest mischiefs. But the hon. and learned gentleman the Attorney-General totally forgot another part of his speech, in which he said that in the week ending the 7th of January 1888, there were in four newspapers alone 60 reports of meetings of suppressed branches. He

brought up an article from one newspaper stimulating the people to subscribe, and another article stimulating the people to attend. He does not seem to be aware of what is the known and habitual mode of existence of religious and benevolent societies. They all of them subsist upon difficulties and debt, and by continual and moving representations of their deficits. By means of these deficits and representations they draw forth these constantly-increasing subscriptions which make these remarkable British institutions the hope of this country. No doubt the branches in many cases are preaching the necessity of increased subscriptions, and, in some cases, they feel that necessity; but my right hon. friend the member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne showed last night that for the first fortnight of February, 1885, the Irish subscriptions were £242, and that they had increased regularly from February, 1885, through the intervening years, until February, 1888, they had grown to the comparatively respectable amount of £520. The right hon. gentleman the Chief Secretary referred to the weight of the hon. member for North-East Cork.¹ I think if he weighs the National League now, since it has been under his proscription for a certain time, it will appear, according to the facts before us, that it will weigh considerably heavier than before.

There is this one other important point—that the right hon. gentleman made no attempt—in the course of his properly protracted speech—to connect the National League or the Plan of Campaign with the commission of crime and outrage. The hon. and learned Attorney-General did make the attempt; and what was the narrow basis of his attempt? It was one on which a tight-rope dancer might, perhaps, find the means of standing, but on which no man with only the ordinary powers of locomotion could hardly avoid a tumble and a fall. The hon. and learned gentleman got hold of two cases of crime—one for the Plan of Campaign and the other for the National League. One was the refusal of a dispensary order! The hon. and learned gentleman, equipped with this magnificent and marvellous apparatus, gravely laid the foundation on which

¹ *i.e.* During his imprisonment.

his charge against those institutions rests. He evolved it out of his own inner consciousness, and because he could not see the cause of an outrage, he said he had a right to put it down to those institutions; and that there might be no jealousy between them, he gave one to the National League and the other to the Plan of Campaign. Let me tell the right hon. and learned gentleman what course was open to him and the Government, if they intended deliberately and seriously to show a connection between crime and outrage on the one side, and those considerable powers which they are labouring to put forth, on the other side. There are two courses which they might pursue. If they think there is ground for their assertion, the hon. and learned gentleman ought to have searched the evidence given in all the numerous prosecutions which the Government has instituted, and shown us upon the testimony of witnesses and the declarations of judicial authority that there is a connection between crime and the National League and the Plan of Campaign. Not the smallest attempts have they made to do anything of the kind; and I must suppose, until I am better informed, that the reason is that they could find no such evidence in existence.

I give no credit to the National League—I give no credit to the Plan of Campaign for the absence of such evidence; because to encourage crime on the part of either of those institutions, or even to tolerate crime so far as they are concerned, would be suicidal. That is the course which the Government might have pursued. I once pursued it myself in arguing the case of that unhappy Bill of 1881¹—unhappy as to the nature of its provisions, adopted for meeting what, nevertheless, at the time, was a most threatening evil. I argued that the Land League was a league as it operated then importing danger to the country, and I showed, or, at any rate, elaborately tried to show, by following the formation of the branches, of the League through various parts of Ireland, and comparing the formation of those branches with the figures of crime in the same neighbourhood, wherever you traced the steps of the

¹ The Peace Preservation (Ireland) Bill.

Land League, there you traced the increase of crime. Why did not the hon. and learned Attorney General take that course? Why did he not say, I find here a county where the National League is especially strong, and I find there that crime abounds; I find another county where the National League is weak, and there I find that crime is small in amount; I find another county, and I apply a similar process in regard to the Plan of Campaign. The hon. and learned gentleman, acting as he always does, with the greatest acuteness and ability on the part of the Government, carefully eschewed those methods of proceeding, because he knew very well that any attempt of the sort made by them would only result in utter failure. I think that the evidence before us, as far as it goes, and it goes pretty far, shows that as regards those great objects which the Government have in view, the putting down of the National League and the putting down of the Plan of Campaign, their efforts have resulted in total failure. Whether it be through the Land Act—by its beneficial but imperfect provisions—or whether it be that the dawning rays of hope are the beginning of a knitting of the hearts of the one nation to the other, there is a diminution of crime, such as it is, still gradually taking place—and we wish it were greater, and we congratulate the Government and the country upon it, and we trust that, under the influence of beneficent and benevolent agencies, crime may continue to decrease.

Such is the retrospect. Well, if that is the retrospect, what is the prospect before us—what is to come? Will the Government ever continue to deal with signs and never look at the substance—will it for ever deal with external symptoms, and never search out the source and seat of the malady; to tear from a diseased and luxuriant vegetation here a twig and there a leaf, but never to ask themselves whether the proper course is not to bring it out by the roots? There are many things said by the Government in debate, but there is one thing that they and their supporters most rarely say—I think, indeed, as far as my own recollection and experience are concerned, I might go further and assert that

they never say. We never, I think, hear them express a confidence that they will be able to establish a permanent resistance to the policy of Home Rule. I am glad not to be met with an adverse challenge, although, no doubt, the kindness of hon. gentlemen opposite, in listening to me while speaking at, I fear, intolerable length, dictates their silence. What I would say to them is this. If this be a question of time at all, then it is most important to consider what is the right time. I do not disguise from myself, any more than the hon. Member for North-East Cork does, the strength of the combination that is opposed to us. They are very strong indeed. They have nearly the whole of the wealth of the country; they have nearly the whole of the high station of the country; they have most of the elements of social strength which abound among them; they have with these all the influence which belongs to wealth, rank and station in this country, which is vast in its amount, and which I must say boldly, is, in most instances, deservedly possessed in connection with them. They are very strong, and by their strength they may secure delay. But, Sir, delay on a subject of this kind—a controversy between nations—is no obvious or unmingled good. It has its dangers and its inconveniences. You are happily free at this moment from the slightest shadow of foreign complications. You have at this moment the Constitutional assent of Ireland, pledged to you in the most solemn form, for the efficacy of the policy which I am considering. But the day may come when your condition may not be so happy. I do not expect, any more than I desire, these foreign complications. Still, it is not wise wholly to shut them out of view. What we have to fear is rather this—that if resistance to the national voice of Ireland be pushed too far, those who now guide the mind of that nation may gradually lose their power and be supplanted by ruder and more dangerous agencies and spirits, and that these very institutions—the National League and the Plan of Campaign—which would vanish into thin air in a rational settlement of the Irish Question, may drive such deep root into the soil, may acquire such a mastery, not only over the understanding but over

the passions of the people—for passion in all these cases will always be let loose, and cupidity to urge unjust claims will always march in the rear of just and fair disposition to urge just claims—these institutions, which have been themselves in the first instance the offspring of bad government, may grow to a dangerous power, may acquire a strength that will enable them hereafter to offer the most serious hindrances to government which is good. I hope that there will be deeper reflection on these matters. In the present administration of Ireland it is quite plain that you are endeavouring to do—and the language of Lord Salisbury himself in his speeches shows too clearly the intention—you are endeavouring, in substance, to do what has long been attempted, but under circumstances wholly different. For 700 years, with Ireland practically unrepresented, with Ireland prostrate, with the forces of this great and powerful island absolutely united—for these 700 years you have tried and failed to do that which you are now trying to do with Ireland fully represented in your Parliament—with Ireland herself as a people raised to a position which is erect and strong and with the mind of England so divided that if you look at the elections of the last 12 months the majority of the people have voted in favour of the concession of her desire for Home Rule. How long is this to continue? I would venture to ask hon. gentlemen opposite, under such circumstances as these, and with the experience which you have, is your persistence in the system of administration—I will not say just, because I know that you contest—but is it wise, is it politic, is it hopeful, is it Conservative? Or will you now at length bethink yourself to change, and consent to administer and finally to legislate for Ireland as you legislate for England and Scotland, in conformity with the constitutionally expressed wishes and the profound and permanent convictions of the people, and will you thus at last consent to present to the world the blessed spectacle of a truly and not a nominally united Empire?

NATIONAL DEBT CONVERSION

MARCH 9, 1888

On this day Mr Goschen introduced his scheme for reducing the interest on certain portions of the National Debt, from 3 per cent. to $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. until April 5th, 1903, and from after that date until April 5th, 1923, to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It was afterwards carried.

It is with great satisfaction that I rise to discharge a debt which, I think, the Chancellor of the Exchequer¹ has laid upon us by making the acknowledgments which his statement deserves. It is quite plain to me, apart from the merits of his plan, that the project he has laid before us is the result of laborious, careful, and thorough examination, which has been conducted in a wise spirit of regard for a long course of precedents, which have afforded him material help and guidance in considering his proposals; and likewise that his mind is fully alive to the principle which ought to govern his conduct, and to the great objects which he ought to have in view in seeking economy for the benefit of the State and the nation; but, at the same time, bearing in mind that economy can never be safely sought or satisfactorily attained if there be any forgetfulness of the principles of equity in the case of those with whom we deal as public creditors, and also bearing in mind the most fatal of all errors, undoubtedly, which a Finance Minister or Parliament could commit—namely, the taking of any steps which would have the effect of lowering the standard of public credit in this country, or producing any uncertainty in the public mind as to the position which Parliament has maintained. So far I have very great satisfaction in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer upon the plan which he has laid before us, and upon the manner in which he has addressed himself to

¹ Mr Goschen.

a very arduous labour. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the midst of the vast subject before him, not unnaturally, did not mention to us on what day he proposes to bring this subject under the consideration of the House, with a view to a definite vote being taken upon it. I take it for granted that he has no intention of asking the House, on this occasion, for any vote which will in the slightest degree commit the House or fetter the freedom of its judgment. One word on the subject, and it is that, having a recollection of what has passed on previous occasions, I am quite sure there is no way in which we could more seriously injure the great public interests involved in this question than by making any undue demand upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer for a lengthened time, with a view to the consideration of this matter. Of all things to be desired, and what I am sure I may expect my hon. friends near me to keep in view and to impress on our minds, is that it is of the highest importance that we should proceed to give a definitive judgment upon this question at the very earliest moment consistent with the largeness of some of the points and the necessary complexity of the subject. Therefore, whatever reasonable demand the Chancellor of the Exchequer may make in that respect, undoubtedly will have our support.

I think, without prejudice to the freedom of judgment of the House, I may fairly say that the prospect which the right hon. gentleman has laid before us inspires us with the hope that much public benefit may be extracted from the plan which he has propounded. I will not say whether it is to operate upon the largest scale which the most sanguine men may hope for, or whether it will operate only upon a more limited scale, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer regards as being more absolutely within his reach; but I will confine myself to the general observation that much good, I feel satisfied, will be extracted from it. No doubt the question of the precise amount of time to be allowed for giving assent is a question of considerable delicacy and difficulty. I do not think it right that we should be more severe on the present occasion than the latest precedent warrants. But, on the other hand, it is right that we

should take into view that within the last thirty or forty years, and since the latest of the greater operations, the means of communication have been very greatly facilitated and expedited, and something may be allowed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that very account. There was one point upon which the Chancellor of the Exchequer made an appeal to us, and which I am very desirous to answer. He said that he hoped that there would be no undue disposition to press him for a disclosure of the terms and particulars at the present moment or at any early stage, as to the mode in which repayment is to be effected in those cases in which it is necessary. With regard to this subject, the Chancellor of the Exchequer undoubtedly made out a very strong case from references to former examples, showing that it has been the practice of Parliament, founded upon wise principles of consideration for the public interest, to reserve to itself great discretion, either to be exercised by itself or by the Executive Government, and it has not been the practice to make premature engagements which might have the effect of causing considerable embarrassment at later stages with respect to the details of the manner in which, in the event of refusal to accept these terms, repayment to the public creditor would be made.

Then I wish to refer to another point mentioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and undoubtedly it is a point which the public creditor will justly and wisely take into his consideration. I speak here from a long experience of these matters, and having felt most severely the comparative impotence of the Exchequer as it stood forty or fifty years ago, with respect to the amount resting in its hands, and available at its own discretion for making good its position in the money market in the event of a great monetary operation upon the National Debt. I think that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has in no degree over-stated the immense improvement in the position of the Exchequer. I may even say that, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not understated it, yet the statement he made is one which would not of itself, I think, give the full measure of that improvement. In one portion of his speech he

said that at the time of Mr Goulburn's¹ operation the Government had nothing in their hands, excepting £30,000,000 of Savings Banks' deposits, which, however, might be regarded as a fund intended to assist them in carrying through an operation of this kind. He then went on to say that there is now a capital of £60,000,000, instead of £30,000,000, at the command of the Government. Now, I venture to make two remarks upon that subject, both of them tending not to weaken, but rather to enhance, the effect which it may be calculated to produce. First of all, with regard to the £30,000,000. At the time when Mr Goulburn had to effect his operation, we had not yet reached to the full acknowledgment of what I take to be undeniably the sound and true doctrine that, with regard to Savings Banks' deposits, the State or the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a banker, and not a trustee. The old doctrine which the trustees of Savings Banks were then disposed to promote was that he was only a trustee, and had no more discretion in the use of those funds than a trustee possesses. A banker does, at his own risk, as he thinks proper with the funds at his command. The Chancellor of the Exchequer does what he thinks proper, or what Parliament has thought proper to enable him to do. It was only in a long course of years that that doctrine came thoroughly to be understood. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in another portion of his speech, stated what is most important—namely, that if you take the capital value of the deposits now in the hands of the State, they are far more than £60,000,000. I believe they have distinctly reached £100,000,000; but for convenience, and even the enhancement of the power of the Government, a large portion of these deposits has been converted into annuities now rapidly repayable, which consequently places a large amount month by month, or certainly quarter by quarter, at the disposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This I venture to say, because I think it is material that it should be understood that, if on the one side he is endeavouring to deal with a very large amount of the Public Debt, on the other hand he is in a position of strength which

¹ Chancellor of the Exchequer 1828-30.

has been gradually in course of expansion, and which I hope Parliament will enable him to use to the public advantage. I will not detain the House with further observations, except, on this occasion, to give my congratulations and the expression to him of my hearty good wishes for the careful and candid and (as far as possible) favourable consideration of these proposals, which evidently have been elaborated with so much care by my right hon. friend, and the expression of my own full conviction that no motives connected with the organisation of party, or difference of opinion on any other subject, will prevent the House, or any portion or section of the House, from giving to this subject and to these proposals an entirely and absolutely candid and impartial consideration.

THE DEATH DUTIES

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 23, 1888

On the motion for the Second Reading of the Customs and Inland Revenue Bill, Mr Gladstone moved an amendment:—"That in the opinion of this House, after Parliament shall have made the appropriations it may deem just in relief of local rates, the Duties accruing upon deaths should be so fixed as to equalize the charge upon real and personal property respectively." The amendment was defeated by 310 to 217.

Mr Speaker—I have been sincerely desirous of compressing my remarks upon this important subject within a very limited space for the convenience of the House; but there is one thing which would be still more inconvenient for the House, and more detrimental to the public interests involved, than the length of any statement of mine, and that is that a subject of such importance should be treated with less of detail than is absolutely necessary for its full comprehension. Therefore I am afraid the only promise I can make is that I will studiously endeavour to avoid in my remarks all that is irrelevant or of secondary importance, and confine myself to an endeavour to give a full and clear idea of my meaning in regard to the important Resolution which I have laid upon the Table of the House, and the reasons which appear to me to make the moving of that Resolution a matter of urgent and imperative duty. I have also to express my regret that I have now to do what I do not recollect to have done on any former occasion, and that is, to move an Amendment on the second reading of a Bill of this nature. It is a practice, however, not at all unusual, sometimes justifiable, and sometimes even necessary; yet still it is one which certainly, in my opinion, founded on experience, ought not to be resorted to without strong reasons. On the present occasion my reason is the strongest that can be conceived, and it is this—that it is not in my power to raise

the question or make the proposal which I wish to make in any other manner. In Committee on the Bill I should not be permitted to move a general resolution, and it would be very improper if I were to make any such attempt, as the only other way in which I could proceed would be to move an increase of duty, and an increase of duty, I need hardly acquaint the House, would not come within the powers of the Committee. Therefore I am reduced to the necessity of moving an amendment on the second reading of the Bill declaratory of a general principle, or I must forbear raising it at all. I think the House will see as I proceed that to forbear to raise it at all would, on my part, considering the gravity of the interests involved, be a failure of duty, and I think the House and the Government will be disposed to admit that I am justified in taking this course, as I think it will see that I have chosen the only available course open to me for submitting a question of public importance to the consideration of the House.

Further, I may say that I rejoice very much that I am not in the condition of one who, from the Opposition Benches even, is proposing financial changes which would increase the financial difficulties of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On the contrary, although no reference is made in the words of my resolution to the precise rates of duty, it is perfectly well understood that the policy which I wish to recommend to the House is a policy of equal Death Duties upon realty and personalty; and that as it is an opinion widely entertained, so it is an opinion strongly entertained by myself that the Death Duties ought to be equal upon realty and personalty, the effect of which would be to augment the funds at the disposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I hope I shall not be deviating from the subject before me if I say that, in our view, this augmentation would be particularly seasonable and advisable at the present moment, when there are before the House a number of proposals for augmenting and increasing certain taxes, in respect of some, if not all, of which I am afraid it is impossible not to entertain the gravest doubt as to their effect on trade and industry. We may, therefore, relieve our

consciences by the reflection that we are endeavouring to place in the hands of the Government additional means which might enable them to exercise greater freedom in waiving some of the financial proposals they are going to bring forward for the further imposition of taxes upon the public than they might be able to do unless the motion I propose were adopted.

I think I shall best serve the purpose I have in view, and the convenience of those who may be inclined to support or oppose the proposition I shall lay before the House, if I at once, in clear and precise terms, state the main propositions I shall endeavour to establish. They are five in number. The first of them is this—That the present enormous disparity under the Death Duties between the charge upon realty and the charge upon personalty has only been tolerated because of the advantage enjoyed by personalty in respect of its limited contribution to the rates, and, in regard to a great portion of personalty, its not being liable to any contribution at all to the rates. That is my first proposition. My second proposition is that on an occasion which Her Majesty's Government have very properly chosen for the opening up of the whole of this wide and complex subject, the advantage now conferred upon personalty ought to be entirely cancelled and withdrawn, and that the proper mode of withdrawing it is by adequate aids to rates from Imperial sources. My third proposition is, that under the new proposals of the Government, including those which will come into operation next year, taking the plan of the Government as a whole, between £4,000,000 and £5,000,000 levied on personalty will go in aid of rates, and principally in aid of realty or the landed interests of the country. My fourth proposition is, that, in the event of the adoption of the proposals of the Government as they stand, and without any alteration, there will still remain a gross inequality under the Death Duties in favour of realty, which inequality will have lost its whole and only justification. The fifth proposition is, that immovable personalty or visible personalty, which has, of all property, by far the strongest claims of relief, will remain liable to the action of this gross inequality. I hope that these proposi-

tions will have the effect of raising the question I am bringing forward in a broad and intelligible manner.

My first proposition has regard to the enormous disparity between the charge on realty and personalty in respect of the Death Duties ; and I will endeavour to put the House in possession of the exact amount of that disparity, as I take it to be. It is, I believe, generally admitted that a large disparity exists ; but I do not think that it is as generally realized how large that disparity is. In all the figures I may lay before the House which are matters of conjecture I will endeavour so to describe them ; and, where there are returns, to give such returns. I have certainly used the best means in my power to be correct, and I shall adopt such methods as I think most likely to lay the whole question before the House in a most practical form. I will proceed now to make good the first proposition. I have to state what the present enormous disparity, as I have called it, under the Death Duties, between the two great descriptions of property actually is. The whole amount of the Death Duties is £7,519,000. I quote, not from the figures given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for a reason which will become perfectly plain as I go forward. Those figures are not the subject of an official return ; and, even if they were, it is not possible, at the present time, to obtain certain other figures which are absolutely necessary to make them available in the present argument. The figures which I take are the latest figures that are before the House and the country in a state of completeness—I mean the figures of the year 1886-7, ending on the 31st of March last year. Under those figures, I will describe the manner in which the largest sum I have named—£7,519,000—is divided between personalty and realty. In the first place, we come to the Probate Duty, which for the year 1886-7 stood at £4,108,000, with one deduction, in my opinion much too insignificant to be taken into the account—namely, the case of real property which is not actually sold, but is contracted to be sold, and which I do not believe can exceed 1 per cent. of the total amount, and is not worth, therefore, taking into the account. With that trifling exception, the whole of

the Probate Duty of £4,108,000 is levied on personalty. Then I come to the Legacy Duty of £2,572,000, which is also levied on personalty; those two sums together making £6,680,000. I then come to the Succession Duty. There is a common and prevailing belief or idea in the public mind that the Succession Duty is levied on realty, and is to be regarded as a countervailing duty, not in amount but in kind, against the probate and legacy duties levied on personalty. But here is a very serious error; and the contention I shall make is this—that only two-thirds of the Succession Duty are levied on realty, and one-third levied on personalty. I must trouble the House by explaining the grounds on which I make that assertion. Probably it would be more convenient for the moment that I should assume the point, and explain when I get one step further on in the argument. If one-third of the Succession Duty is levied on personalty, that sum, added to the £6,680,000 which represents the two great Death Duties of Probate and Legacy, makes a total of £6,960,000. Then there is the question, upon what mass of property is this duty levied; and here I apologetically state to my right hon. friend and the House, that I will enter into no discussion whatever as to the comparative amount of the total values of personalty and realty in the kingdom at large. It would be extremely difficult to arrive at it in a positive form, and it is in no way necessary for my purpose. That which is necessary for my purpose, and that to which I shall confine myself, is to show the rates of duty that are charged upon one and the other respectively. When I have shown that, my argument will be complete. Then I must consider upon what amount of property this annual duty is levied; and there I am not involved in any difficulty, because it is levied upon an amount of property that, in my opinion,—and I doubt if that opinion will be contested,—is fully and amply represented by the Probate Duty. The Probate Duty was levied for that year on the sum of £138,000,000. The Legacy Duty was levied on a smaller sum, there being many kinds of property that escape the Legacy Duty, including those kinds of property which, to a very large amount, pass under

the Succession Duty while being personalty. But the Probate Duty, as far as I know, includes every sort of personalty that pays the Death Duty at all. I take the amount as it is—at £138,000,000, and I make the sum of which I have already spoken £6,960,000 levied on £138,000,000 of capital; and if hon. gentlemen will have the kindness to make the simple calculation for themselves, they will find that they amount to a rate of little over 5 per cent., levied at death, on every change of hands, upon personalty for the purposes of the Exchequer as the law now stands. I want to compare that amount with the amount actually levied on realty; and here I must show why it is that I withdraw from the proceeds of the Succession Duty no less a sum than one-third of the proceeds, and treat it as levied on personalty and not upon realty.

The amount of property which passes under the Succession Duty annually is £43,797,000, or, for the sake of round numbers, £43,750,000. Of that £43,750,000, £35,000,000 are realty, and £8,750,000 are personalty. But the realty which passes under the Succession Duty is charged upon the life interest; the personalty which passes under the Succession Duty is charged upon the capital value. A contention that I make with the utmost confidence, and which I am bound, I think, to make good—although the amount involved is not very large, but it has application to other portions of the argument—is this: that the charge upon the life interest, as it is made, reduce by at least one-half the incidence of the charge. In answering some remarks which I offered to the House the other day, the Chancellor of the Exchequer¹ contended, if I understood him rightly, that to treat the charge on the life interest, amounting to no more than a half of the capital value, was a mistake; and the reason he gave was the depression of landed property, and that landed property would not sell for so much now as it did ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. I say that is a condition totally irrelevant. If landed property sells for less now, why is it? I am not speaking of the monetary state of the market; I am assuming, probably, that which the Chan-

¹ Mr Goschen.

cellor of the Exchequer assumes, or what might prove to be the case, and most people will think it to be the case—namely, that the value of landed property will be depressed, but depressed not on account of its selling for a smaller number of years' purchase, but because the number of years' purchase will be assessed on a reduced income, and that reduction of income will be represented in full in the figures which we have before us. I believe that, if the average of the values of lives is taken, though they run up as high as fifteen or sixteen years, according to the ages of successors,—if the average values of those lives be taken, I believe it will be found that, even supposing the charge on the life interest were a full charge—which it is not—that the capital value is at least twice, nay, is more than twice the value of the life interest. But, sir, the charge on the life interest is not a full charge. And there, again, I mention to the House that one point must be kept in view, if we are really going to consider and understand the question; and that is the point that there is offered to the successor in the case of landed property, while the successor to personalty is bound to pay at once, a licence to pay in eight half-yearly instalments, the first instalment only falling due after the first rent day which follows the decease; and, in case of paying up at once, as the successor to personalty is bound to do, he receives from the Revenue Department a discount of 11 per cent. I am understating my case when I say that the successor to personalty charged on capital value pays more than double what the successor to realty pays; because the latter pays only on the life interest, and pays on a life interest under the favourable conditions prescribed by the Succession Duty Act.

I might adduce a great deal more matter not only in support of that argument, but in enhancement and extension of it; but I have said enough to show, I think, that I am taking the case in a moderate view when I state that the £8,000,000 charged as Succession Duty, which are personalty, are charged at the very least at twice the rate at which the £35,000,000 are charged that represent realty; that

is to say, £35,000,000 are charged upon less than half their value; and the real value, though there seems to be only £35,000,000 passing under the Succession Duty Act every year, is not £35,000,000, but £70,000,000. As the proportion of the Succession Duty is one-fifth, and as it is paid at double the rate, it follows that the charge is double in its relation to the property upon which it is paid. That being so, the simple thing I have to do is to take the proceeds of the Succession Duty and divide them, not into fifths, but thirds or sixths. Two-sixths, therefore, are paid by the £8,000,000 of personalty which passes in the year, and four-sixths or two-thirds by the landed property—that is, two-thirds of the total proceeds of the Succession Duty. All I have to show is that, while £6,900,000 yielded by personalty in the year 1886-7 fell upon £138,000,000 of property, and therefore represented a duty exceeding 5 per cent., £560,000 yielded under the Succession Duty Act by realty fell upon £70,000,000 of property, and represents, instead of 5 per cent., 13-16ths per cent. If you multiply that 13-16ths by the figure 6 it gives you 78-16ths—that is to say, a trifle under 5 per cent. Thus under the present law the payment of personalty is almost exactly six times the payment of realty. That is a matter which is not undeserving of consideration, and certainly justifies the use of the phrase—"enormous disparity." It is an enormous disparity, and the justification of it, or the cause of it, lies in the working of our present law in respect of rating.

My second proposition is that this, and no other, is the occasion on which that disparity ought to be remedied and removed, so that we shall not hear any more of it. I look with a friendly eye, as I have said before, on various points on the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It contains the elements, and even the substance, of very important reforms. In the first place, it puts an end, so far as the great mass of Rates in Aid is concerned, to that system which I must be permitted to call an abominable system—for we are all more or less tarred with the same brush—of rectifying the injustice done to certain kinds of property by drawing large sums out of

a fund—namely, the Consolidated Fund, which is supplied not only by property, but largely supplied by labour. It is not necessary to enter into that now. I admit that, upon the whole, the intention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the plan of the Government is to treat this, as it ought always to have been treated, as a question between one kind of property and another, and not as a question between property and labour. Labour was never liable to be rated, but we have made labour, through our system of Rates in Aid, pay a very considerable proportion of the charges levied through the medium of rates. For the course adopted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this respect I am grateful to the Government. I should be very sorry to put to hazard any proposal which would have the effect I stated. I am also very glad that a great reform, I think, is going to be effected by what will be called clearing the accounts as between Imperial and Local taxation. All these things are excellent, and when I heard the Budget Statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I thought that there was another great public object going to be secured—namely the final settlement of the question.

Now, it appears to me that to go into a subject of this kind, involving, as it does, a vast disturbance of our finance, for it is nothing less than a vast disturbance—the creation of new taxes, and the bodily transfer of certain taxes now received by the Exchequer, is not an operation which ought to be done from year to year, or every three or five years. It is an operation, which, when it is done, ought to be done completely. I have not assumed, in the Amendment I submit, that the figures of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as they now stand, are absolutely final figures. Judging from what I hear, much doubt is raised in respect of some of the new charges he proposes to create for the benefit of the local treasuries, and it is not for me to say what is the sum that ought to be paid over by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or through the medium of the collective power of the Exchequer to the local treasuries. All I say is, that the sum ought to be considered now and ought to be fixed now, and when we have

fixed it, we ought to have done with it. It is a question of doing justice between various kinds of property. What are those various kinds of property? I want to call the attention of the House to the distinction that ought always to be borne in mind in discussing this matter, but which is very commonly forgotten. It is supposed that the whole question lies between personalty and realty, that when you relieve realty to a certain extent and place certain charges upon personalty without entering further into the matter, you have done your duty. There cannot be a more gross mistake. It is necessary to distinguish between personalty and personalty; it is necessary to distinguish between rated personalty and unrated personalty. The case of unrated personalty is one which involves, of course, a very large amount. It is a case with regard to which I do not wish to express an opinion, and I have not formed any very positive opinion of the amount of charge upon it—if you could get at it—in order to do justice to those descriptions of property that bear the rates. Perhaps the Government have more and superior information upon that subject, and I should be disposed to attach great weight to their opinion. But what I wish to impress upon the mind of the House, and to insist upon is this, that now is the time to transact this business, and that we are bad workmen and do not know our business if, when we have set our hand to an operation so large and complex as that which is now before us we do not make it, so far as the term can be used in this matter, a complete and definite operation. It ought to be dealt with once for all, and we should not leave to be done over again a work which we have approached in an irresolute spirit and treated in an imperfect manner.

The House will, therefore, understand that I ask them to vote, that when adequate compensation has been given to local rates, the duties accruing upon death should be so fixed as to equalise the charge upon real and personal property. As to what is adequate compensation, I do not wish to say, and I make no complaint of the proposal of the Government. The proposal is to give £5,600,000, with something more in prospect next year for Scotland and Ireland in aid of the rates, as compensation for get-

ting rid of Grants in Aid. It is our duty to make a just and fair compensation ; and when it is made, so that the local treasuries have no longer a just claim against the Imperial Treasury, we should then see that justice is done within the Imperial Treasury by an equality of charge, as I shall endeavour to show it ought to be, upon personalty and realty respectively. Perhaps I may venture to point out to the House what is the best information I can obtain upon the division of the property of the country—upon ratepaying and non-ratepaying property. I do this because I wish to bring into view the grievance which the ratepaying proprietor has against those who do not pay rates. To ascertain the whole property of the country, I have no other course open to me, nor any better I think, than to resort to the Return which was laid before the House in 1885 by Sir Henry Holland, now Lord Knutsford, and which I will call Sir Henry Holland's Return, he having been Secretary to the Treasury at the time it was given. That Return, I think it is No. 345, of the year 1885, has the merit of being short, simple, and intelligible. It gives the whole property of the country, that which can be strictly so called, as £9,410,000,000. Realty is set down at £3,778,000,000, and personalty at £5,632,000,000. But when we look into the Return, we find that not quite the whole of the realty,—because realty includes ground rents and other interests of that kind, which I need not mention, though if I did it would strengthen my case—nearly the whole of the realty is subject to rating. But besides realty, which is set down as subject to rating, I find what the Return calls realised personalty stated at £1,042,000,000, which consists of about £830,000,000 of realty property, and £210,000,000 or £215,000,000 of property in mines, iron works, canals, and so forth. I take that property from that side of the Return presented by Sir Henry Holland, and put it to the £3,778,000,000 which are called realty, but which I do not think are accurately so called, and which are, in the main, subject to rating. That being so, I divide the property into ratepaying and non-ratepaying property ; the total amount subject to rates is £4,820,000,000, and the estimate of the realized

personalty not subject to rates is £4,590,000,000. So the House will see that, according to the evidence of this Return, which, I should think, is not very far wrong, the whole burden of rates and of local taxation at present is laid upon little more than one-half of the property of the country.

Mr. GOSCHEN—The whole of the £800,000,000 of railway property is not rated really, but only so much of it as is visible.

Mr. GLADSTONE—I beg pardon; I entirely differ from my right hon. friend. In my opinion, rates are levied upon a great deal of property that is not visible; but my meaning is that that which is visible bears the charge upon the whole. The rate upon railways is levied upon the proprietary interest. It is quite true the shareholders have arranged their interests in a complicated manner, past ordinary, past preference, and so on; but the rate takes no cognizance of these distinctions, it is levied upon the entire beneficial interest. I consider that to be altogether indisputable. This, however, is not connected with the general argument I am pressing on the House. I am referring to it rather to show that the ratepayers have great reason to complain that my right hon. friend takes a good deal from property subject to rating, and adds to it that which is not. About one-half of the property of the country—not much more than one-half, although the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make it a great deal more than one-half—is subject to rating; and, therefore, I argue that there is a good and strong case for adjustment.

There are some important facts I will not refer to, because they would complicate the case too much, without any countervailing advantage; I will mention only those that are material to my argument. I am bound to say that, in the Return of Sir Henry Holland, there are a number of items upon which questions might be raised. One of them is the £300,000,000 that is put down as the value of property belonging to persons who are not represented in the Income Tax; but as that, and various other items which might be questioned, are not immediately connected with my argument, I pass them by. There are varieties in the mode of charging the

Death Duties which are also in themselves singular, but which do not require much discussion now. It may be argued that some descriptions of real property, such as ground rents in populous towns, are not subject in any way to rating, either immediately, or in any other way. It is very doubtful if the burden of the rates reaches, or will reach, while the country continues to advance, that description of property. In the main, we may proceed on the assumption—and it is an important assumption—on the present occasion—and one which has always been urged in the interests of the proprietors of land—that lands ultimately discharge the rates that are levied in the rural districts; that personalty in general is charged with both Probate and Legacy Duty. That, however, is not uniformly true, because visible personalty, by which I mean the secondary interests of occupiers in messuages and tenements, is charged to the Probate Duty, and is not charged to the Legacy Duty, but is charged to the Succession Duty in the manner I have described. But I do not think any of these considerations bear very materially upon the point I wish to bring before the House—namely, the disparity—and I will say the gross disparity—it is proposed to leave in the mode of charging personalty and realty after the settlement now in contemplation has been made, and the justice, policy, and necessity of removing that disparity.

My next proposition is this—that under the new proposal of the Government £4,000,000 or £5,000,000,—or call it what you like—the exact sum may be a matter of dispute—I think the Chancellor of the Exchequer called it £4,000,000; but, at any rate, we know what is meant—under the proposal of the Government £4,000,000 or £5,000,000, which is now levied in one form or other under personalty, will go in aid of rates, and it will go practically in aid of realty and of the landed interest. The way in which it will go principally in aid of the landed interest is this—going back to the statement contained in Sir Henry Holland's Return, the total value of rateable property, with the transfer I made and explained, is £4,820,000,000. Of that £1,746,000,000 does not consist directly of landed property in the strict sense of the word.

Then, when one comes to the large item of messuages and tenements, which are put down at £2,032,000,000, the question arises—How much belongs to the landlord and how much to the tenant? Here I wish to state distinctly that I have made nothing more than a conjectural estimate; but considering the matter as well as I could, and taking the whole of this enormous mass of property, valued by the Return at £2,032,000,000, which is, perhaps, rather a low valuation, for it is taken only at 16 years' purchase, I estimate that, in one shape or another, one-half belongs to the landlord, whether he draws the ground rents or whether he has the reversion, and one-half represents the secondary interests. If that be so, of the £4,830,000,000 of rateable property, £2,762,000,000 would belong to realty and £2,038,000,000 would belong to personalty, representing that portion of the interest in houses in the hands of the occupiers which may be called secondary interest. If that be so, the landlord's ultimate share of the subvention which the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes to give to local rates will be represented by the proportion of £2,762,000,000 to £2,058,000,000—that is to say, as nearly as possible seven-twelfths of the subvention is the landlord's ultimate share, and five-twelfths is the ultimate share of the occupiers. I mention that to sustain the third of my five propositions—namely, that a large and even a preponderating portion of the subvention now proposed to be made will go in favour of realty or of the landlord's interest.

I now come to that which is one of the two most important propositions I have to substantiate—namely, that even with the rectifying processes proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer there will remain a gross disparity between the Death Duties charged upon personalty and those charged upon land. We know now what personalty will pay, and the whole that personalty will pay; but what personalty will pay to the Exchequer is a question we must now determine. Here is what personalty will pay to the Exchequer if the proposals of the Government are adopted as they stand. I am obliged again, for the sake of completeness, to go upon the figures of

1886-7, and to put out of sight such changes as may occur in the coming year. On the basis of the figures of 1886-7, the amount of Probate Duty is £4,108,000, but only one-half will go to the Exchequer, or £2,054,000. The Legacy Duty is now £2,572,000, and the Succession Duty is £280,000. There is an addition proposed to be made by my right hon. friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer; but, of course, that addition, small as it is, will not be levied wholly on land—one-third will be levied on personalty—for so I understand the statement of my right hon. friend. I understand the proposal to be that the 1 per cent of the Succession Duty is to be raised to $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent; that the other rates in the consanguinity scale are also to have $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent added to them, and the general proposal is that the Succession Duty shall be raised $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That being so, personalty will pay, on the whole, to the Exchequer in Probate, Legacy, and Succession Duty £5,046,000; and that, charged upon £138,000,000 is a little more than $3\frac{5}{8}$ per cent.

Now, Sir, what would be the Duty on Realty? Recollect I have struck off all the contributions made to the local treasury. I do not take them into the account. £5,046,000 will be received from personalty, representing a charge of $3\frac{5}{8}$ per cent. or a little more, Realty will pay the £560,000, which it pays now, and an addition of half that sum—namely £280,000. The total will be £840,000, as the entire charge upon realty, and it will be paid upon £70,000,000 worth of property. Taking again the figures supplied to me by the Return for 1886-7, that £840,000, which will be paid upon £70,000,000 of property, represents upon the whole $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes the addition of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent by way of establishing a sort of equality between the Death Duties charged on personalty, and the Death Duties charged on realty, and I make a comparison of the charges as they will actually fall. I find that after we have satisfied the claims of the local rate by a large transfer of taxes, and by other means under the plan of the Government, there will remain a system under which personalty will be charged $3\frac{5}{8}$ per cent. while realty will be charged $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent—that is to say,

personalty will continue to bear three times the charge borne by realty.¹

How is it possible to justify such a state of things as that? What view will the nation take, and justly take, of it? What view will any man who has a regard for financial justice take? What notion will the masses of our countrymen form of the manner in which their interests are studied and cared for by the representatives whom they have chosen? I should care as little as any man for what the great masses of the country think, if I thought they were going to be deluded, or were being influenced by their own selfish interests: but here is a statement laid before them that realty is only to pay £1, while personalty is to pay £3, and this, too, after the Government have professed to rectify the inequality. What opinion, then, will the country justly form of the manner in which these interests are situated and provided for by the representatives they send here?

Now I come to my fifth, and, I am glad to say, my last proposition—that immovable personalty, which of all descriptions of property has by far the strongest claim to relief, will still remain liable to this gross inequality. Confining my view to a limited portion of the field, I must compare the way in which you are invited to treat land under this plan with the manner in which you are going to treat other personalty at large. I have said that personalty is to pay three times the percentage paid by land. Let me now refer to the case of visible personalty, because the case of visible personalty has also been systematically and almost culpably overlooked in most of our discussions. I want, if I can in some degree, to point out what are the claims and what are the gains of land and visible personalty respectively. Understand that what I mean by visible personalty is represented by the £2,038,000,000 of which I just now spoke, and it is made up of railway property, mines, and ironworks, and property of that class, and all

¹ In the course of the Debate, Mr. Gladstone corrected this statement. "3½ per cent." should be "slightly under 3½ per cent." "Consequently, the future payment to be made by personalty, instead of being fully three times the amount paid by realty, will be a small amount short of that."

the leaseholders' and occupiers' interest in messuages and tenements. A very large sum is £2,000,000,000, and it represents one-fifth of the whole property of the country. I want to show what is the injustice which this property has suffered, and which it is proposed that it should continue to suffer. For that purpose I must compare the claims of landed property with the claims of visible personalty, and I must compare what it is proposed to do for landed property with that which it is proposed to be done for visible personalty. With respect to the claims of landed property, I must say this—that although there is, in my judgment, a very strong and well-founded claim on the part of those liable to rates in general, yet the claim of landed property is by far the weakest portion of the larger claim. Why is that? It is because the urgency of that claim has been based upon the fact that there has been an enormous increase in the rates; but, in all our debates upon this subject, I have observed—when demands have been made in the interests of the ratepayers on the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Consolidated Fund—I have uniformly observed that those who pleaded the cause of the land—and very ably, I must say, some of them have pleaded it—have never been careful to call attention to the remarkable incidence of this increase in the rate. They always took it in the lump, and enlisted the whole support of the urban Members, who knew how their constituents were groaning under these imposts. The landed proprietors, in fact, posed as the sympathising friends of the urban communities. They represented that they had a common grievance, and took a common stand with the towns—they held their interests were one, and a tender brotherly feeling was displayed on the part of the landed proprietors towards the whole urban community of the country. I do not recollect that the same sort of thing was shown at the time of the discussion of the Corn Laws. But the fact is that the land took enormous profit from an increase of rates, which it never suffered itself. There has been an enormous increase of rates in connection with a system by which almost all new rates are to be borne by the tenant, and not one sixpence by the landlord, who stands by with folded arms.

We have now received a return on this subject, and I am much obliged to those who have compiled it. It is, I think, a return published by the Local Government Board, and it gives a comparison between the rates in 1873-4 and the rates in 1884-5. There is also a volume published by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is a very high authority, but it is of an earlier date, and does not exhibit the case as well as the more recent document. Now, how does the case stand? Taking, first, the case of the Metropolis, I find that comparing 1873-4 with the rates in 1884-5 there was an increase in the rates in those eleven years, amounting to £2,653,000, or 67 per cent. Now, are the provincial towns much better off? Not a great deal, Sir. The absence of self-governing institutions appears to have given to the Metropolis a slight pre-eminence and superiority in regard to the increase of this expenditure; but I am bound to say that the self-governing towns run a very fair race with it, and in some cases make a very creditable show indeed. I take next, then, the case of all urban districts outside the Metropolis, and I find that in the period specified there was an increase of £2,729,000 upon the rates, representing 59 per cent. I come now to the mixed urban and rural districts, which are very extensive. Their total rating is £9,858,000; but what I am alluding to—namely, the increase, is only £1,194,000, or 13·8 per cent.—under 14 per cent. And that, Sir, is not all, for perhaps the most interesting of all these classes is that composed of the districts purely rural. I must heartily congratulate the rural districts, and I rejoice myself in being personally in any manner associated with them, for I find that in their case this large increment of rate dwindles down to the almost contemptible sum of £213,000, or 12 per cent.

Mr. GEDGE¹—Are they self-governed?

Mr. GLADSTONE—I have not the least doubt that the hon. Member is quite as competent to answer that question as I am, and that he knows as much about the rural districts. Does he wish to impose upon me the duty of putting into my observations a parenthesis which would occupy at least a

¹ Member for Stockport.

quarter of an hour, without the smallest countervailing advantage of increasing the knowledge of the House at large or that of the hon. Member?

So much for the general claim of the landed interest; but what is its claim under the present plan? The landlord will get, undoubtedly, the benefit of the whole contribution we are going to make to the rates in the rural districts. But when will he get it? That is the question. But I do not think that it requires any lengthened argument at the present moment. My opinion upon it is clear and strong. He will get it very quickly indeed. If rents were rising he would not get it quickly. If rents were stationary he would not get it quickly. If there were no general movement in rents he would not get it quickly. He would get it by degrees upon a change of hands in his various lettings. But I am afraid it is an admitted and melancholy truth that rents are feeling the depression of the times, and are going down from year to year. Some have come down, perhaps, and some may, I hope, have reached their lowest points; but upon the whole they are moving in a downward direction, and if we are to consider them in a declining state, the full benefit of this subvention from the Consolidated Fund to the local treasury must come at once, or very shortly, to the landlords. If we are agreed, and I am afraid there is no difference of opinion—I wish there was—that rents are generally declining; if we are agreed in that, I will illustrate my meaning in this way. Let us suppose the case to be represented generally by a single farm belonging to a single individual—a farm rented at £300 a year under the old system, and what we should call a flourishing state of agriculture. On the farm the rates are £60. On the day before the Budget I receive a statement from the tenant setting out the condition of the farm, of course including the amount of the tithe and rates, and saying that he cannot continue to pay the £300 any longer, but that he could pay £200, and making an offer of that amount. Very well, I suppose that I myself, as the landlord, receive that offer on the day before the Chancellor of the Exchequer is going to

speak. The Chancellor of the Exchequer makes his speech, and the next^a morning, before giving an answer to the tenant, I read the speech, and I find that the rates on my farms will be very considerably reduced, and that on this particular farm they will be reduced from £60 to £40 by the important subventions that are about to be made. Very well, I make my answer to my tenant, and I say to him, "That is very hard upon me. You ask me to reduce your rent from £300 to £200 a year, but since your letter was written there are to be important changes in regard to taxation. You calculated your offer on the basis of the rates being £60. The rates are now to be £40, and, that being so, your offer is evidently an offer of £220 a year." In that way the landlord gets the benefit of £10, £15, or £20, as the case may be. Now, I take that as an illustration to show that the benefit of these subventions must necessarily fall into the hands of the owner of the freehold, and will pass by the occupier. Well, Sir, these benefits, which, as I have said, will go entirely to the owners of landed property, cannot be represented by a less sum than £2,000,000 and out of the subvention you are going to make, the entire landed property of the country is to be called upon to meet a charge of £280,000.

I want, now, to compare this mode of treating the landed property with the mode in which you are going to treat the visible personalty of the country, which is of no less importance than landed property, and, if the observations I have made are correct, at all events of not much less importance; for while the value of the whole freehold of the country is one-fourth of the entire property of the country, the value of visible personalty, or the secondary or tenants' and occupiers' interest—call it what you like—it falls under the head of "visible personalty"—is about one-fifth. What, then, is the claim of the owners of visible personalty if we are to be just towards the owners of land, the owners of visible personalty, and just towards everybody? The claim of the owner of visible personalty, then, is greatest, and it is the greatest on these two perfectly distinct and perfectly substantive grounds. First of all, it is upon him that this enormous increase in the rates must come. This in-

crease of 67 per cent. in the Metropolis, and of 59 per cent. in the urban districts, is an increase, nearly the whole of which must fall upon the owner of visible personalty. This is one of his claims.

The other claim is, that while other classes have been touched on one side only, while the owners of other kinds of personalty have been touched by the Death Duties and not by the rates, and the owners of landed property have been touched, or very slightly touched, by the rates, and not by the Death Duties, the owners of visible personalty have been, to use a homely phrase, hit both ways; they have been hit by the rates and by the Death Duties through the medium in full of the Probate Duty and in part of the Succession Duty, therefore the owners of visible personalty have a double claim for relief upon the Government, of which, however, the plans of the Government take no cognizance whatever. Especially in regard to this enormous mass of property held by tenants and occupiers, with a secondary interest, no cognizance whatever is taken of it in the plan of Her Majesty's Government. How do the Government treat them? I have shown their claims to be a maximum; I shall show their advantages to be a minimum, though I do not say they have none at all. Of course they gain, like the landed proprietors, from the reduction of the Income Tax, and they gain upon the Succession Duty. But the peculiarity of the case is this. This plan is a great plan, and a good plan in many respects; and the essence of it is that, by giving about £1,125,000—I think it is from the Probate Duty, one moiety of the Probate Duty—compensation is to be made to the ratepayer for his disadvantage under the present system of maintaining local rates. Nothing could appear to be more equitable.

But what is the real state of the case with regard to the owner of visible personalty? He contributes his full share, to that very fund out of which he is to be compensated. In fact, he is to pay his own compensation. While the landed proprietor is to get, with perfect justice and propriety, I admit, his compensation from other people, the owner of visible

personalty is to get his from himself. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is to put money into one of his pockets, and immediately extract it from the other; because, so far as I recollect, this claim of compensation, although very large, consists mainly of the moiety of the Probate Duty you are going to hand over, and to that Probate Duty the owner of visible personalty contributes as fully as any other class of owners. Now, sir, I think I have made good what I have described as my fifth proposition—namely, that visible personalty, which of all property has by far the strongest claim of relief, will still remain liable to this great inequality. And while, on the one hand, the owner of visible personalty will, through the medium of the Probate Duty, have to pay to himself his compensation, which other owners will receive from other parties, they are likewise to be called upon by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to pay under the Death Duties three times as much as is levied upon the landed proprietors.

How long will these inequalities continue? It is impossible that they should continue without limit. Well, sir, they will not continue without limit; they will continue for a time, and then they will disappear. What is to happen to-night? A division, of course, we shall have, and the House will give its decision. On whom does that decision depend? It depends on Liberal politicians who take the name of Unionists. I think I have kept, as I am bound to do, my pledge to the House to avoid drawing its attention to any irrelevant matters, and therefore I am not now going to dispute the right of those gentlemen to that name. I say that the decision of the House depends on the Unionists. I may take it for granted that some of our old friends—a sprinkling, at any rate, if not many of them—will give their votes with us to-night; but that will not much matter, for individual votes are of comparatively small importance. A stray Tory used in the past to be allowed to vote for the Ballot, but then it was perfectly well known that the votes of the whole Party would be sufficient and adequate to prevent any mischief that might arise from the fact that a single sheep had gone astray. So with regard to the

Liberal Unionists; it is not the vote of this or that member, but of the Liberal Unionists as a body that is of importance here. Do not let it be supposed that we shall not be thankful for their votes; we shall be glad of any individual votes—the more the better, and few are better than none. But with reference to the public issue, they are not equally important. A larger division or a smaller division, a larger majority or a smaller majority, may cause a few cheers upon that side or upon this, but the cheers will pass away, while the result will be recorded. The result depends upon the action of the party as a body. They are acting as a body—they have shown their capacity to act as a body—and in what they deemed to be the saving of the Union they have shown that they are a body, and in that capacity they have supported the Government upon a hundred questions that have nothing whatever to do with the Union. Let them show it to-night. If they go as a body with the Government, it is upon them, and them only—it is upon Liberals, and not upon men who are not Liberals—that the maintenance of this system of inequality will rest. It will be their crime, for the Government are in a minority in this House. They have supported them on twenty or fifty occasions when the majority was made up by Liberals. What the country must understand is that these gentlemen professing the Liberal creed, many of whom believe conscientiously—and they are entitled to that belief if they think fit—that they are the best Liberals, the most consistent of Liberals, the most resolute Liberals—those are the men who are to maintain and keep alive this inequality. These are the men who will be responsible for handing down this system of threefold taxation on personalty as compared with land, and support it as one of those precious institutions which they think we ought to bequeath to our posterity. If there is to be victory for the Government, if this resolution is to fail, to that cause, and that cause alone, will that victory and that failure be due.

But it is necessary to do something more than achieve that victory. It is necessary to answer the facts that I have laid before the House. It is necessary to answer them, not

with mere generalities, not by doleful representations, true as they may be, that the landed interest of the country is depressed; it is necessary to break down, and not in detail but in their main substance, the statements and the figures I have laid before you, and which have proved that you are going to give a final sanction to a threefold system of taxation on personalty under the Death Duties as compared with what land is called on to pay. Do you think that system will last? Let me say—and perhaps I may make an appeal a little nearer home—that this subject is not entirely new. There was a Cabinet in this country in 1885; at that time hon. gentlemen sitting below the gangway, whose characters we know to be most unquestionable, were welcome allies of those who now sit opposite us in opposing our financial proposals. What was it that we proposed? It was a proposal which had the support of my noble friend the member for the Rossendale Division¹ of Lancashire—a proposal which, with a single exception that we did not remove what I have described as the 10 per cent. discount in respect of half-yearly payments, was similar to our present proposal. With that single exception, we proposed in 1885 to establish for the purpose of meeting the wants of the Exchequer, a perfect equality between the Death Duty on land and the Death Duty on personalty. That was then the sentiment of my noble friend the member for the Rossendale Division of Lancashire, and which I hope he will support to-night. And why should he support it? Not only from consistency, but from the strongest possible *à fortiori* cause. In 1885, to meet the necessities of the case, we then proposed to equalize, along with my noble friend, the Death Duties on land and on personalty, although at the time we were not in a condition to make, and we did not propose to make, the slightest concession to ratepayers. There was no Liberal Unionist Body then. We adjourned the claims of the ratepayers; but we, and my noble friend among us, declared that even under these circumstances, the Death Duties upon realty should be made equal to those upon personalty. I see

¹ Lord Hartington, afterwards Duke of Devonshire.

my noble friend has some notes in his hands. I have no doubt they contain a most admirable and conclusive speech in support of the Resolution. If by any accident or caprice of fate, if by any of those marvellous or secret causes which operate in the decisions and actions of men and sometimes even of the best and most distinguished men, if from the wheel of the lottery or from any cause, by the support of my hon. friend, victory should come to the Government to-night—I do not envy them that victory. It will be the opening of a new struggle, a fresh controversy. It may last for a while. If you take up that ground, you may be able to hold it for a limited period; but it will end, as a hundred other controversies have ended in my recollection, which reaches over the time of the Reform Bill, in the triumph of right and justice, in the triumph of a policy of wisdom towards the nation and against the ill-understood and recklessly supported interests of a class. It will end as it has ended before in this—that we shall have soon upon us a momentary and temporary triumph, followed up by permanent odium and discredit and ultimately by a final defeat.

THE GOVERNMENT AND IRELAND

THE MEMORIAL HALL, LONDON, MAY 9TH, 1888

Mr Gladstone was presented with an address signed by 3730 Nonconformist ministers of various Churches, expressing approval of his Irish policy. The Rev. Dr Clifford, chairman of the Baptist Union, presided.

Mr Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I accept with gratitude as well as pleasure the address which has been presented to me, and I rejoice again to meet you within walls which, although no great number of years have passed since their erection, have already become historic,¹ and which are associated in my mind and in the minds of many with honourable struggles, sometimes under circumstances of depression, sometimes under circumstances of promise, but always leading us forward, whatever may have been the phenomena of the moment, along the path of truth and justice, and, thank God, to a triumphant issue. I have heard with deep interest the terms of this address read by Mr Rogers,² your own speech, and that which he delivered. I feel indeed, that the warm and too generous description of myself and of my political life ought to have on the one side a humbling, yet undoubtedly on the other a cheering and encouraging effect; but I am also very thankful to you both, and to those who have signed this address, for the courageous manner in which they have not scrupled to associate their political action and intention with the principles and motives of their holy religion.

We are here, however, on political grounds, to discuss political matters, and I will begin by reminding you that

¹ "Erected" in 1872 "to commemorate the Fidelity to Conscience shown by the ejected ministers of 1662."—Inscription on the building.

² The Rev. Guinness Rogers.

there has been an anxious and most reasonable desire on this side of St George's Channel that the Session of Parliament which is now in progress should be a Session fruitful in British legislation. Well, we of the Opposition have done our very best to expedite the business of the Government and to assist in the fulfilment of that reasonable wish. I take no credit for our so doing, but I must say a word on behalf of gentlemen who are, or who were, seldom mentioned with commendation before a British audience. I mean those Irish Nationalists who, notwithstanding the pressing needs of their country and the grievous oppression which, as we think, she is undergoing, have refrained from anything like persistent effort at what might have been an unseasonable urging of her claims, and have thoroughly and heartily co-operated in that purpose which the ordinary Opposition entertain, of promoting the general business of the country. A sign of what has already been accomplished by the holding out of the hand of reconciliation may be seen in the consequences which cannot fail to flow forth in proportion as they see more and more what a hold their cause has obtained on the mind and the heart of the British nation, and how surely it is marching forward towards the happy accomplishment of their wishes.

One good work has been done during the present Session. I mean the financial scheme—not perhaps deeply studied by a large portion of the public—for the Conversion of the National Debt. That is a very good piece of work, which we have been most ready and desirous to promote and advance. With regard to other financial operations, I cannot bestow upon them the same unqualified praise; and it would be premature to speak at the present time of what the performances of the Session will at the close prove to have been. There are very important questions before Parliament now—non-Irish questions—as to which we wish heartily well to those who have taken them in hand. I will reserve for the present any further description of them till we know more as to how far the promises which have been made, and made, I have no doubt, in good faith, may be brought to a full performance. But what I want to impress

upon you is this, and I lay it down with some confidence as a rule positive, and almost absolutely inflexible—that whether or not Parliament is employed in the discussion of Irish questions at this or that given time, it is Ireland, and Ireland alone, which truly holds the key at this moment to British legislation.

Why do I say so? Not only because the present Parliament is a Parliament elected to deal with the Irish question, but because the whole motive which governs the composite majority in Parliament upon the discussion of every English question is so to treat that question that there shall be no risk run of the frightful calamity of the introduction of a Government that might give Home Rule to Ireland. To illustrate what I have said, I daresay you are aware that there has passed through the House of Commons, notwithstanding our resistance, and by a large majority, a measure ¹ under which, after the enormous boon which has been given to the landlords of England in the shape of a subvention to the rates, the Death Duties are to be so arranged that every thousand pounds of personal property shall pay to the Exchequer three times as much as the same value of real property shall pay. Well, what between Liberals so called and Nationalists, there is a decided majority in the House which ought to have prevented that injustice. Why was it not prevented? Because the motion to preclude that injustice was made by the Opposition, and that motion might have allowed of the introduction of a Government [prepared to grant Home Rule to Ireland; so that those who will have to submit to injustice in England will have to submit to it simply for the sake of avoiding that contingency which I have no doubt is conscientiously believed by the whole majority to be the greatest of all national calamities.

But there is another and a similar case. For the sake of obtaining a sum of revenue which may be called a trumpety sum—what the Chancellor of the Exchequer has stated at £125,000 a year, and he has now promised to alter his plan, so as materially to reduce even that amount—he is going to disturb the commercial arrangements with France

¹ See p. 348.

by putting a plea and an argument into the hands of the powerful Protectionist party in that country, in consequence of the new duty that he is imposing on wine, which will fall principally and most heavily upon French wine. Well, gentlemen, I should have said it was impossible to conceive a measure more plainly impolitic, and, for my own part, I should have been very glad if the Government had either abandoned it of themselves, or had abandoned it upon a division without treating it as a Ministerial question. But that also is a question apparently of the Ministerial life, and a large majority, aye, even an unusually large majority, of the House of Commons was brought down, therefore, to vote for this most impolitic duty on wine,—trumpery in its results, most dangerous as tending to disturb our commercial relations, and a trade of £50,000,000 a year with our nearest neighbour, simply in order that there may be no risk run of having a home Government for Ireland. Those are things which have actually passed, but others are coming on.

We have got before us, for example, the Local Government Bill,¹ a Bill in many respects very useful and very promising, but a Bill undoubtedly which has blemishes, and serious blemishes. I will mention two of them. I think you will agree with me that one of the very first—if not the very first, and most appropriate duty of institutions of local government—is the care and management of the police. Under this Bill it is proposed to commit that care and management, partly, it is true, to the elected representatives of the local communities, but partly also to nominated persons. I think—and I believe you will think—that is objectionable, and that it is the elected representatives of the people, and they alone, who ought to conduct the detail of police administration according to the law for the local security of person and property. I have no doubt that we shall raise that question in the House of Commons, but most probably we shall be beaten. Why will Englishmen have to submit to have their police partly con-

¹ The Local Government (England and Wales) Bill was passed during the Session, the Licensing Clauses having been withdrawn by the Government.

trolled by nominated personages? Simply that there may be no risk of a Government coming in prepared to give Home Rule to Ireland.

There is another question which will interest you more deeply, I have no doubt, than even the important question I have named. I mean the question of the Licensing Clauses. I am not going—for time will not permit me—to attempt a discussion of those clauses; but this I must say, that the Government have—no doubt with good intentions—made a very great mistake. For the first time they propose to create by statute a legal right of renewal and a vested interest on the part of the publican in the perpetuity of his licence, such as has never been dreamt of in the history of this country. I will not enter into the question whether, when you come to deal with publicans, compassion or equity would induce you to adopt any mitigating measure of any kind; what I am to speak of is the creation of a statutory right—the creation of an estate in a licence—of an estate in a licence which is only subject to forfeiture upon contingencies which practically never happen. That subject will, of course, be discussed in the House of Commons; but I will tell you that it may be decided adversely, adversely to what I gather to be your views, and adversely to what are certainly my own. I am perfectly certain of this, that if it is so decided, it will not be so decided on the merits of the case; but the Liquor question and the Temperance question in England will be ruled according to what the Government may choose to exact and to require, for fear an Administration should come in that would grant Home Rule to Ireland. This is one of the cases in which truth is a great deal stranger than fiction. If any one had told you five or ten years ago that you would live to see the time when English politics would in principle and detail be decided by the question whether Ireland was to have local self-government or not, you would have told me that it was a supposition so extravagant that the good sense of the country would rebel in a moment against such a system, and it would not be allowed to continue. There is the system before your eyes in full bloom; in full operation, working from day to day, week

to week, and month to month. I have pointed out the cases in the past tense of what has happened already. I have pointed out the cases in the future tense as to what is very soon going to happen, and you will have an opportunity within a few weeks of judging whether I am guilty of an exaggeration or not.

So much for the relations of the English and Irish questions, and for the claim reasonably made by the people, and rather boastfully countersigned by the Government, that we were going to have an English Session. You are going to have an English Session—a Session in which every English question will be decided by the votes of dissentient Liberals, not upon the questions involved in the subject itself, but upon the ulterior question whether the decision may shake the foundation of the present Ministry, and thereby run the risk of bringing in a Government favourable to Home Rule. I am going to say of the majority of the House of Commons, without in the slightest degree impugning their personal good faith, or questioning their right to free judgment at least equal to that which I claim for myself—I am going to say of them what possibly may be thought rather disrespectful. It is a deliberate statement that they have forfeited the pledges on which they were elected. If that be so, the question arises how far, and in what sense, do they represent the people? We know very well that they do not represent the people of Ireland. Six out of every seven men from that country assure us of that. We know they do not represent Scotland; there a very large majority are against them. We know that they do not represent the people of Wales; for there is against them a majority even equal to that which Ireland herself has sent. Do they represent the people of England? I think that the aggregate evidence of the elections which have taken place since the beginning of last year shows that they do not represent the present mind of the people of England. But I am not dwelling upon that. I am not anticipating their fiat at a General Election, which several people say is not to happen for five years, a risk which they think they can safely run against the life of an old man. They are quite at liberty to say that if they please; but, in the first place, I think that they make a very great mistake if they suppose that

the life of an old man, or the life of a young man, has anything to do with the progress of this question. In this country, which in the long run is self-governing, the national sentiment and conviction will find the means of asserting itself, and it is not this or that individual who will determine the issue. But as to the question of their five years, or their any number of years, I have always stated this, and it is my conscientious belief, that this country, this England, is so strong that, humanly speaking, she can—as she has in many instances before—persist for long years in a course of wrong-doing without being driven and compelled to amend her ways. Therefore I am not going to say how long this resistance will be continued, or how long this Parliament will last. There is a higher conception of the matter. It is not for man to determine the times and the seasons. They are in better hands, and I am content to await the judgment which will be given by the Supreme Authority upon the issue of this great question. But what I say of our majority is this—not only does it appear that the sentiment of the country is adverse to the actual policy, but that they have abandoned and forfeited all the pledges of policy upon which they were chosen.

Let me remind you of the situation as it was. We alleged in 1886 that the alternative lay between Home Rule and Coercion—that you must do the one or the other, that Coercion had failed, and that we would have no more of it, but would follow Home Rule. With what counter allegation were we met? That we had raised a false issue; that the alternative did not lie between Home Rule and Coercion; that they, most of them, abhorred Coercion as much as we did, or, at least, condemned and renounced it; but that the true course lay between Home Rule, on the one hand, with a Central Parliament in Dublin; and, on the other hand, in the absence of anything like a Central Parliament, and in the strict and liberal maintenance of the system of equal laws for Ireland. So that to renounce Coercion, and to promise, at any rate, a liberal concession of local Home Rule—aye, and in some cases more than that—we say was the platform on which the majority stood at the General Election. But what have they done? In the first place, they have completely

verified our declaration, which showed that there was no option between Home Rule and Coercion; and you have Coercion, of which I may say a word by-and-by.

But what have they done with regard to local institutions and self-government for Ireland? One of them, with two or three followers behind him, Lord Randolph Churchill¹—I must say in an honourable manner—did adhere precisely and verbally to the pledges he gave at the elections in 1886, when he engaged that whatever was given to England or Scotland in the matter of local government should be as freely and largely given to Ireland, and should be simultaneously given. When I say simultaneously I am aware that a certain sequence is required in Parliamentary business, and of course I do not mean actually at the same moment of time, but I do mean in the same chain and order of proceedings. What has happened now? A great measure of local self-government is intended for England, and a like measure is promised, but what is to happen to Ireland? Mind, this was the pledge—the alternative to our demur about coercion. They said that there should be no Coercion, and no Parliamentary or statutory Legislature in Dublin; that there should be, and would be, a generous administration of equal laws and institutions; and that what was good enough for England and Scotland was good enough for Ireland. You see now that local government is withheld from Ireland; but you see more. They are not satisfied with withholding local government from Ireland. I am obliged to read words spoken by Lord Hartington,² and quoted by Lord Spencer,³ declaratory of the new policy, which is that Ireland is to have no local government, but is to remain with her present scandalously defective institutions, with her institutions which no one whatever would dare to offer to England or Scotland in satisfaction of their claims to local government, until she has changed her mind on the subject of Home Rule and Parliamentary

¹ Member for South Paddington, Chancellor of the Exchequer, August—December 1886.

² The leader of the Dissident Liberals, afterwards Duke of Devonshire; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1871-74.

³ Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1869-74, and 1882-85.

government. What does Lord Hartington say? He was quoted by Lord Spencer—and the quotation has never been questioned—at Scarborough on the 5th of November last:—"I believe that it is the first duty of Parliament to assert, if necessary to assert again and again, that the recognition of Irish nationality as the basis of Irish government, it (that is, the British Parliament) will have nothing to do with. When the idea is definitively removed, when the Irish people have ascertained that this people will not grant it, then, and not till then, will the ground be clear for the consideration of the plan by which the same local government, the local liberties and powers of government, shall be extended to them as Scotland and England ask for themselves." Am I wrong in saying that that language, which has become the basis of the policy of the whole majority, is a flat abandonment and a total contradiction of the pledges which the present majority set up at the election in 1886 against our doctrine of Home Rule and by which they induced the majority of English constituencies to send them back to power, as it has now appeared upon untrue, unsound, empty, and false pretences?

That is the ground on which I have said that the majority seemed to me to have no moral title to represent Ireland, Wales, or Scotland. They had a moral title to represent England when they came to power in 1886 on the basis of equal laws for Ireland and of No Coercion; but both these pledges have been cast to the winds, and I say that they have now no moral title to represent England, as they have no legal title to represent Ireland, Wales, or Scotland. We have had Coercion introduced, and exceptional law, for the first time in substance imposing a special restraint upon Ireland, in the face of the opposition of the Irish popular party—without an exceptional state of crime. There is no exceptional state of crime. Moreover, the Coercion which has been introduced has not been a Coercion against crime; it has not been substantially connected with crime. It has been a Coercion against combination. And combination—it stands and glares upon us from every page in the history of Ireland—is the only arm by which a poor and desti-

tute and feeble population are able to make good their ground, even in the slightest degree, against the domineering power of the State and of the wealthy with England at their back. It has been a Coercion, not against crime—and crime, singular to say, at the present moment, in the very last quarter stands as nearly as possible at the very same point as it did in the last quarter before the Coercion Bill was introduced. In the quarter ending the 31st December 1886, the agrarian offences reported to the constabulary, after deducting threatening letters, were ninety-four. In the last quarter ending 31st March 1888, they were not ninety-four but ninety-eight. I am not treating that as a serious increase, but merely as an illustration of what I said—that this Bill was not passed against crime but to get rid of juries, to place the decision on questions of coercion in the hands of judges of a stamp such as the Government could reckon upon, with very great and rather unusual confidence, to put down combinations of the people.

Well, now, as I am saying that it is a Bill to promote the collection of rents by putting down combination, perhaps you would like to hear how it has succeeded—to hear how it has succeeded, not from a personage like myself or any of those in this room, but from the mouth of Mr Balfour himself. These are the figures which were given in our last at all full debate on the state of Ireland—I think just before Easter. But, observe, that in talking of the success of the present Government, certainly that success is not to be found in the satisfaction of the people, or in the diminution of crime. Well, is it found in the collection of rents? Now, hear Mr Balfour, and this is literally his description of the glorious achievements which Lord Salisbury's Government have, by the help of a composite majority, contrived to accomplish in Ireland:—"The information that I have been able to collect"—(I quote Mr Balfour from *The Times*)—"leads me to believe that at this moment the landlords of Ireland, with exceptions which might actually be counted on the fingers of both hands, would gladly accept the proportion of the arrears which the hon. member would desire to see them receive. You may search Ireland from the north

to the south, and from the east to the west, and few indeed would be those landlords who would not grasp at the terms of the hon. member, and who would not gladly receive, in lieu of the debts owed to them by their tenants, such a proportion of the arrears as would have been their due had such an Act as that of last year been passed in 1886. Not only that, but the landlords would gladly accept, and are every day accepting terms far worse." So much for the success of the Government in promoting the collection of rents. What efforts were made to promote the collection of rents under Lord Spencer's administration we have never repented of; we thought it to be our duty. We are not the friends of disorder or of breach of contract under any circumstances. But I am now pointing to the question of the success of the policy adopted by the present Government in defiance of pledges given at the General Election.¹ They might have derived a sort of glamour from success had it been realised; but you are now in a position to judge whether there is that false appearance of success due to it.

I quoted to you the words of Lord Hartington. I ought also to have reminded you that those words, showing that there is to be no grant of local government to Ireland of any sort, until the Irish people have entirely abandoned what Lord Carnarvon called their "national aspirations"—I ought to have reminded you that those words have been echoed in the language of Mr Smith, the leader of the House of Commons. He has expressly declared that until the Irish people are prepared to use local institutions in a constitutional manner—that is to say, never to turn them to any account for the purpose of obtaining more extended privileges—no jot or tittle of those local institutions shall be conceded. I think I have justified what I said.

And now I come to the minority of the House. You would say that nothing could be more deplorable than their position. We have one steady, solid—almost solid—majority opposed to us on almost every imaginable question, and with absolute certainty on every question which could possibly

¹ July 1886.

raise the contingency of that frightful danger to which I have just alluded—that a Government might come in which would possibly grant Home Rule to Ireland. In regard to the position of the minority, I take some comfort from reflecting that the majority against us has not, I think, been quite so large as those majorities which we had to face in what we called the “Jingo” period.¹ Then we were still worse. But we have for consolation that if we are a minority incessantly voted down, yet I venture to assure you that discussion in this country, and denunciation in this country, within the walls of Parliament and without the walls of Parliament, if it has not brought about the reign of good in Ireland, has at least limited and restrained the reign of evil. You may remember some words so short as to easily plant themselves on the tablet of the brain—the words² “Remember Mitchelstown.” A few days ago I received a couple of small green silk labels from Australia, and printed on them were the words “Remember Mitchelstown.” The sender assured me that many thousands of these labels were worn by the population of the place in which he lived. You will remember that case. I will be very brief in referring to it, but it is too important to be allowed to drop. A legal, peaceful, orderly meeting—and an illegal assault upon that meeting by the constabulary. An attempt to drive a mass of constabulary through a body of three or four thousand people—an act certain to create disorder, and distinctly illegal and disorderly itself. Every man of that body of constabulary ought to have been committed for his offence. I am not blaming them individually; I am blaming the directive power, and pointing out what they did under the influence of that directive power. That assault, unsuccessful at first, was immediately renewed, and again the people were assailed. A sort of battle ensued. The constabulary, even when reinforced, were too weak for their purpose, and retired. Some momentary scattering of the outside of the crowd took place, but in the main they remained together. Under the pretext of a riot which was not a riot, and in streets which were almost empty, the constabulary took aim

¹ See p. 300.

² See p. 319.

from the windows of their barracks at three persons, one of them a lad, and the others old men without the power of any vigorous action whatever, none of them having done any illegal act, or having apparently even taken any part in the meeting, yet they were shot dead. But what is more formidable is that when the account of these proceedings was brought to England and mentioned in Parliament, it was declared that the constabulary had done their duty and no more, and that if they had done anything else they would have been to blame. Was it not time for us who are not under the thumb of the Government of the day to say, "Remember Mitchelstown?" With such a sanction given and such eulogies pronounced on this illegality, might there not have been more Mitchelstowns? But thank God! they have been stopped. That is what the Government call maintaining the law—maintaining, eulogizing, and commending breaches of the law. Ay! and murderous breaches of the law. And this is what justifies us in saying that our great business during the last six or nine months has been to maintain the law in Ireland.

The other day another case occurred, happily of a milder character, and so, perhaps, it has not drawn so much attention. A meeting had been held which, I assume now, was an illegal meeting; but it was a peaceful meeting, and when an illegal but peaceful meeting is held the legal course is to warn the people, and, after a certain time, stronger measures may be taken if they do not disperse. This meeting, which was at Ennis, was in the act of dispersing. The cavalry were driven into a yard among them. Two persons were injured. I am very thankful there were no more; but it was a gross piece of misconduct on the part of those who directed the cavalry to adopt such a method of dealing with a peaceful meeting. The Government, nevertheless, defend the course that was taken deny us all full information, make their own *ex parte* statements, refuse to produce their documents, and yet, as I do not believe there will be any more Michelstowns in Ireland at the present time, so I am very doubtful whether any more officers will

order regiments of cavalry to charge in among orderly and peaceful meetings.

You know how the Coercion Act has been administered. You know what contemptible exhibitions have been shown of the disposition to insult as well as to oppress the Irish people. Lads and poor men selling copies of newspapers in the streets are made responsible and put in prison because they contain reports of branches of the National League, not of all, because there are plenty of those meetings which are perfectly regular, but of branches of particular places, and those men were to ascertain for themselves, I suppose, whether in the particular places the League had been declared illegal by the Lord Lieutenant. We denounce those attacks on the weak and helpless, and I think we shall see that there will be no repetition of them.

Another practice is this. The Government promised* when the Coercion Bill was passing that there should be an appeal in all cases from the sentences of the resident magistrates. They broke that promise, and they only gave the appeal where the sentence exceeded a month; but they at least left upon record the evident intention of the Legislature that wherever there was more than a month's imprisonment there should be an appeal. They could not directly break that law, but they contrived completely to break and violate the spirit of it by passing two sentences at once, so that the man should have at any rate two months' imprisonment and yet not be entitled to his appeal. Now, here a curious incident occurred. Upon inquiry they discovered that this was not the first time that such a practice had happened in Ireland. They allege that they found, and I am not in a condition to dispute it, that the same thing had been done under Lord Spencer's Government—a thing perfectly possible, not with the knowledge of Lord Spencer, not with the knowledge of Sir G. Trevelyan,¹ not with my knowledge. But I have not the least doubt that those things, and other things equally objectionable, and, to Englishmen, intolerable, have been done and done again and again in

¹ Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1882–85.

Ireland under all Governments, For there is a bad tradition of administration. There is an anti-national spirit of administration, there is a determination to use the law, not as here, in conformity with the enlightened and general sense of the community, but for narrow purposes in a narrow sense, and without those popular sympathies which happily here pervade the whole system of our jurisprudence, and, therefore, I am not all surprised that such a thing should be discovered; nay, more, I am very glad it was discovered; but you observe the difference, that when such a thing is discovered Sir G. Trevelyan and our friends at once not only declare their want of knowledge of it, but their shame and regret that it should have existed, while this Government think as they found it was done before, that of itself makes it right, and they have the audacity to defend it. I am sorry to see it stated in the *Star* newspaper that there has been a case in which a miserable and shabby trick was played, which I conceive to be just as gross a breach of the law in its spirit as if the letter of the law were broken by the act. I will not say more on this than that we shall contrive that that practice shall be put an end to.

There is another practice still. You are all aware of the almost unheard of provision—unheard of in Ireland until quite lately—under which the Court of Appeal, appointed for the benefit of persons on whom sentences may have been passed, has augmented and aggravated those sentences. This has been done, in the opinion of many good lawyers, flatly against the law. I could quote high authorities in support of what I say; but whether it is against the law or not as far as the letter of the law is concerned, it is against the fixed and universal usage of our jurisprudence, and against the evident intention of the Act of Parliament. This action of the Court of Appeal we denounced in the House of Commons sharply, and in a manner which has excited the exasperation of some members of the Government who always proclaim their desire to support law and order, and they came forward to vindicate this system. But there have been no more cases—more, I think there will be no more cases. And if there are

cases, you will hear more of them, and the House of Commons as the great Court of Inquest into grievance will be asked to pronounce whether these intolerable things are to be done in Ireland which England would not endure for a moment, and which if she did endure, would render her totally unworthy of the liberty she enjoys.

But you will see that the case of the minority, bad and discouraging as it is, is yet not without what I may call crumbs of comfort. I remember a parallel and analogous instance¹ in which a minority such as ours, with a majority of more than 90 in the face of us, had been able to produce, simply by appeals to the public judgment of the country, a marked effect upon the administration. This question of law is indeed a grave and serious question. In England we attach to the observance of the law an inestimable value, although, with few exceptions, when the law has been very annoying and cruel, and people have lifted up their hands against it, the public judgment against it has not been a very severe judgment. I remember the case of the Swing Riots in 1830, which had an enormous effect in procuring the Reform Bill. They were not to be justified, but they sprang out of a real grievance; and I say where there is fault on both sides you must distribute the blame according to the laws of right and reason, and that the blame is often more on the side of those who make and enforce the law than on those against whom it is enforced.

Last night there was an important celebration, when a dinner was given to Mr Parnell,² who took the opportunity to declare his views with respect to the observance of the law. What he demanded was this:—"I regard the right of combination, of free speech, freedom of the Press, and the right of public meeting as vital for the securing of our liberty in Ireland." That is the demand, and the only demand he makes; and beyond that demand I am glad to perceive and infer that he is as much devoted to the main-

¹ The agitation against the "Bulgarian Atrocities" in 1876.

² At the Eighty Club.

tenance of law and order as you are. I must own to deriving great consolation from that fact. I have other subjects of reflection that are not so satisfactory, and I may refer to one in particular that has been supposed to be a sore place in the whole Irish case—namely, what is known as the Plan of Campaign.¹ Mr Parnell has very properly said he was not the author of that plan, and that he is not prepared to vindicate it. Nor am I prepared to vindicate it, but I am prepared to say that it ought like the Rebecca riots² and a hundred other cases, to be fairly judged. It ought to be well considered who were the real authors of the Plan of Campaign. I say boldly that the real authors of the Plan of Campaign are the present Government, and Mr O'Brien³ and those who acted with him were really, in the main, instruments in the hands of the present Government, for reasons which I will immediately tell you.

What had taken place? In the year 1886 a new and most disturbing incident had arisen in the Irish land question. The fall in agricultural prices brought about a crisis, and there was a general apprehension that even judicial rents could not be paid by the tenants, and that the whole question of the land in Ireland must be re-opened by the admission of the leaseholders, whom, in our supreme respect for contract, we had not consented to admit to the benefits of the Act⁴ of 1881. * The Government appointed a Commission⁵ to inquire how far this was the case, and whether the rents could be paid or not. We asked from the Opposition side of the House that, while the Commission was sitting, temporary provision might be made to meet those cases where rents could not be paid. What did the Government do? They refused Mr Parnell's Bill,⁶ and refused even the extremely modest demand I made myself, that some time should be given to those who proved before the judicial tribunals that

¹ See p. 334.

² 1843.

³ Member for North-East Cork.

⁴ The Irish Land Act.

⁵ In August 1886, under the presidency of Earl Cowper.

⁶ The Tenants' Relief (Ireland) Bill, rejected by 297 to 202.

they could not pay rent. The Government declared judicial rents to be sacred, that it would be immoral to alter them, that faith and honour forbade it. Then came the distress, then the evictions,¹ then the Plan of Campaign,² and then Bodyke.³ What I ask is, Did or did not that result from the conduct of the Government? Yes, and why are we entitled to say so? Because in the summer of 1887 they did the very thing⁴ which they had refused to do in 1886. They did, interfere with the judicial rents, which they had declared would be a breach of duty and honour. And did they not thereby vindicate those who, seeing the people starving, had founded this scheme, which was called the Plan of Campaign, in order to afford to the people some of the benefits of a relief which, four or five months afterwards, the Legislature itself confessed to be necessary?

This is the way in which, in all its proceedings, the present Parliament has been tampering with the principle of legality in Ireland. If you want to undermine law and legality, the effectual way to do it is to make the law odious to the people. Can you possibly make the law more odious to the people than by refusing a reasonable demand, which was made in 1886, by allowing the evictions to take place and the public horror to be excited, and then, by your fresh legislation out of time, to concede that very demand, and so establish the proof, the damnable proof against yourself? So it has been in a thousand acts. And see what the consequence, is, gentlemen. Look at it! The consequence is that Mr Dillon⁵ holds this sort of language so lately as last Thursday. "They talk to you abroad of keeping within the law. Why, bless my soul, you kept within the law too long. As long as you kept, as they call it, within the law and looked to Parliament for relief, you found you were treated with contempt by a party

¹ In the autumn and winter of 1886-87.

² October 17th 1886.

³ In June 1887 some evictions carried out by the police and troops at this place led to scenes of great violence.

⁴ By passing the Land Law (Ireland) Act.

⁵ Member for East Mayo.

of men who would not even take the trouble of understanding what your sufferings were." That is the way in which Mr Dillon treats the case I have just been endeavouring to handle. Now, who is Mr Dillon? Mr Dillon is unquestionably a man of talent and eloquence. But, what is more, he is a man admitted by all to be a man of character and a man of honour. Into what a state of things have you got when language like this is forced, by the urgency of the circumstances, out of those who are men of character and men of honour? It seems as if, in everything, the object were to insult, to exasperate, and to degrade the people of Ireland. I assure you I might give you instance upon instance of the strange manner in which this grievous process is carried on, not, it is impossible to suppose, with the purpose, but unquestionably with the effect of driving deeper and deeper into the hearts of the people of Ireland that estrangement no longer, I am happy to say (thanks, gentlemen, to you and others like you) owing to England but to the party that now wields the power and the law of England.

I will give you two instances. One may be slight in comparison, but you will understand the force of it. The Government have introduced into Parliament a Bill to create a new salaried office.¹ We consider that office quite unnecessary. There is a Lord Lieutenant who seems to do nothing, and there is the Secretary for Ireland, who does not appear to us to do more than his predecessors have at times done. That is a small question, it is merely what is called "a job." It is right to protest against it, but it is no great matter. But look to the choice of the individual. When the Government were going to create a new office and a paid office, for which the Irish were to pay their share, would not common sense and would not common decency have urged that there should be some care in the choice of the individual to fill it? I am not going to pronounce any sentence on Colonel King-Harman. I am going to speak of that which is perfectly notorious and believed by the vast mass of

¹ That of Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Colonel King-Harman, Member for the Isle of Thanet, died in the following June, and the Bill was withdrawn.

the people of Ireland. Colonel King-Harman appears as a landlord to be unfortunately in most painful relations with his tenants, and to have had very large reductions forced upon him by the Land Courts in the shape of judicial rents. Further, he is a landlord who was formerly a Home Ruler, and, according to the statement of some, a somewhat extreme Home Ruler, as judged by his association with particular individuals. Whether he has been what they call in Ireland a Tory or an Orangeman I know not, but he has become one of the most prominent opponents of the popular right. Surely it is an extraordinary thing, looking at the state of the land question in Ireland, to select a man so embroiled, whether rightly or wrongly—to select a man who has had the misfortune to be a Home Ruler a few years ago, and who afterwards abandoned the cause of his country. It is an extraordinary choice to put that man into this office which will give him a tenfold and most painful notoriety.

I will quote another instance. I referred just now to Mitchellstown. I told you that there were three men wantonly and causelessly shot down. A verdict of wilful murder was found by the coroner's jury. That verdict was quashed. I am not going to say—I am not able to say—whether there was or was not anything wrong in quashing that verdict. Some people asked whether anything could be done for the relatives of those people who were wantonly shot down. Nothing could be done. The Government said that they had no means to do anything, and nothing was or has been done. But there was a policeman named Leahy, one of those—I do not blame him, for I look upon the responsibility as having been entirely absorbed in the superior officers, and then in the Government—one of those who committed the illegal act of assaulting a peaceable and legal meeting—one of those who created a disturbance and who, in that disturbance, was himself so severely mauled and injured as possibly—I do not say actually—to place for a time his life in danger; at any rate, seriously injured. In doing an illegal act he was injured, and the Cork Grand Jury has met together and has awarded to Leahy the sum of £1000 in com-

pensation for the injuries he received, so that a constabulary officer, who illegally attacks a peaceable meeting, and is injured in consequence of his own attack and that of his fellows, is to receive compensation, levied locally in Ireland upon the Irish people, while the fact of three men wantonly shot down and deprived of life is not to be made the subject of any judicial trial or inquiry. Neither are their relatives to receive any consideration or compensation whatever. And then, forsooth, you go into Ireland and preach respect for the law.

The chairman said, and said truly, that you met here as Nonconformists. Yes, and I address you, gentlemen, as Nonconformists, not upon the ground of any theological question, but upon the ground of your place in history as Nonconformists. Pray recollect, first of all, what it is we want in Ireland. We want in Ireland, not only law but legality. We want not only a forced obedience to the law, to be maintained at an almost incalculable cost of treasure, and at a cost of infinite ill-feeling by constant displays of force—cavalry, constabulary—all over the country from week to week, That is not the obedience to the law we want. We want willing obedience to the law,—that spirit of obedience to the law which we call legality, in the estimation of which law is a consecrated thing; that spirit of obedience to the law which never can be generated by coercion, which is the child of freedom, which is the mainstay of order, which, at this moment, is far beyond our armies and our navies, far beyond our factories and our farms—the secret of British strength.

It is not more than historical truth requires to say that in producing that spirit of legality you have played an important part. You have made a large contribution to that noble end. Let me go back yet a little further than Mr. Rogers, who spoke of the year 1842. I go back to the time of Lord Sidmouth and the Six Acts. Pray remember that coercion, although happily forgotten, has not always been a thing unknown in England. Coercion was in vigour then, and what were the results? The results were unbounded pauperism, and a deluge and flood of crime such as is now happily unknown. For that coercion you, gentlemen—

your forefathers have no responsibility—you took the line of objection, and the use of every legal power, for the purpose of substituting a better and a truer and a more enduring system. A change, thanks be to Almighty God, has been brought about, largely by the efforts of British Nonconformists—a system of freedom has been substituted for that method of government by coercion. What is the result? Education spread, pauperism diminished, crime largely contracted and constrained, and the mind of the entire people possessed with that respect for law—I will even go further, and say with that love for the law—which, when I was a child, was a thing almost unknown.

Gentlemen, I congratulate you on your share in that work; but look to the work itself, how blessed it has been; and look in painful contrast to what has taken place in Ireland. There is a double lesson to be gained, a double admonition, from this side of the Channel and from that. Here you repealed Coercion—you substituted liberal and generous government—and your reward has been the establishment of order upon foundations as firm and strong as ever were laid in any age or country in the world. In Ireland the opposite course has been pursued. An incessant series of Coercion Acts, the last Coercion Act differing from all others in this particular—that it is directed, not against crime, but against the natural and only arms of the people, and that it has been placed upon the statute-book to form a portion of your permanent legislation, attended with failure so gross as I have endeavoured to describe to you—failure described by Mr Balfour himself in the vital and essential matter of rents, failure testified in the entire face of Ireland, where you find that every popular voice finding expression, either through the choice of Members of Parliament or in the election of any body, be it what it may, proclaims the wrong that is being inflicted, and the sense of resentment of that wrong, mitigated and qualified only by the confidence placed by the Irish people in you, and in those who think like you, from whom they hope for a complete and even for an early redress. Surely, with this double lesson before us, we ought no longer to hesitate. All we want is to

bring home to the upright and honest mind of the English people the proof of the facts as they stand, in order to induce them to amend the errors which have so long, unhappily, possessed them in regard to the sister country, and to join with you in the determination that now, at last, justice shall be done, and that the future, if it cannot cancel, shall at least confess, and shall in some degree retrieve the sad and terrible errors of the past.

END OF VOL. IX

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
FORTHCOMING BOOKS,	2
POETRY,	4
HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY,	7
GENERAL LITERATURE,	8
WORKS BY S. BAKING GOULD,	9
FICTION,	10
NOVEL SERIES,	11
BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS,	12
ENGLISH LEADERS OF RELIGION,	13
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERIES,	14
SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY,	15

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